



# 2020 NEW HAMPSHIRE CIVIC HEALTH INDEX™



University of  
New Hampshire

Carsey School of Public Policy



National Conference on Citizenship



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*We would like to thank the following people for their hard work in pulling this index together: Laurel Lloyd, Nicholas Gosling, Michele Holt-Shannon, Jess Carson, and Carrie Portrie of the Carsey School of Public Policy; Zachary Azem and Andrew Smith of the UNH Survey Center; Deborah Schachter of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation; and the NH Civic Health Advisory Council.*

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# INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

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When we began writing the 2020 New Hampshire Civic Health Index, we couldn't imagine the looming pandemic that was about to redefine what it means to be connected to one's neighbors, to trust the basic social institutions that we rely on, and to participate in public life. Economic hardships, disruptions in learning, stress on health care systems, and finding new ways to simply shop for groceries are having significant impacts on civic health—many of which we won't understand for months or years.

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We are already seeing direct effects on voting, the conduct of public meetings, the ways that we trust those who are “not from here,” and which groups are most vulnerable to morbidity and mortality. Simultaneously, millions of Americans, some for the first time, have turned to organizing and protesting in response to the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, joining the Black Lives Matter movement in calls for racial justice and police reform. It has been a year of loss, disruption, and action unlike any we have seen for decades in the U.S. All this has illuminated both our vulnerabilities and our strengths as a nation.

We know that communities with high levels of civic health are more resilient to economic distress. We know that when people feel connected to family, friends, and neighbors, they are more engaged in community life in general. Residents of civically healthy communities trust their elected officials, vote at higher rates, and volunteer in schools and other public places. They also are more likely to feel like they matter to their community and can have an effect on the decisions made about how those communities function. The great paradox of our current times is that the restrictions on everyday connections necessary to stop the pandemic makes it harder to maintain relationships, trust, and collective action, which are key to a healthy civic sector. The loss of connections in the short-term makes it imperative that there be explicit and sizable efforts to rebuild connection in the months and years ahead.

In 2020, the threats to individual health that have come with COVID-19 are associated with threats to civic health. As our health care providers have fought bravely to combat the pandemic, others have worked hard to teach children confined to their homes, to deliver food, to keep our communities safe, the roads repaired, and the lights turned on. The infrastructure we rely on to connect us physically—roads, telecommunication systems, water supplies, public transportation—all things we often take for granted, depends on a civic infrastructure, too. The need for a strong civic infrastructure has become only more evident during the pandemic. For instance, volunteerism such as looking in on older neighbors, charitable giving such as donating to a local food bank, and helping out family and friends who may have lost their jobs are civic acts that have been literal lifelines for people, making it more apparent how critical civic infrastructure is to the health of our communities. But even in times that are not crises, people are working every day to build and strengthen civic health, including volunteers who serve on school boards, neighbors who lend a tool, and organizers working to get out the vote. At a time when “social distancing” is seen as the primary means to stay safe, it seems especially important to understand what civic health is and how to maintain it.

What if we cared about the health of our communities in the same way we care about the health of the people who live in them? What would we look for? What diagnostic tests would we use to determine if New Hampshire were healthy from a civic point of view?

The report that follows provides just that—a diagnostic assessment of the civic health of New Hampshire. The civic health of our state is measured by how people connect with others as well as how they are thinking about and taking action on political and social issues. Just like the individuals who live here, our beloved state as a whole deserves to live a good life, free of conditions that might limit its ability to thrive, grow, and look to the future. Like an annual check-up with a physician, we have the tools now to take the state's temperature, measure its vital signs, and even prescribe fixes when we find some parts of the body politic are doing worse than others.

The need for a **strong civic infrastructure** has become only more evident during the pandemic.

The 2020 New Hampshire Civic Health Index (2020 Index) continues the practice of regular checkups, building on previous Indexes published in 2006, 2009, and 2013.<sup>2</sup> Over these years, our state has experienced a Great Recession and a significant slow-down in population growth even as we have welcomed many newcomers, especially those from overseas (a group that accounts for most of our population growth over the past two decades).<sup>3</sup> Taking stock of our civic well-being, similar to tracking economic indicators, makes sense in light of the changes the state has experienced in recent years. Understanding our civic habits, who participates and who does not, is critical to the physical, economic, and political health of our state. This is especially important in order to understand the experiences of people who have historically participated less in public life and whose voices are less likely to be heard when public decisions are being made.

The purpose of the 2020 Index is to provide a comprehensive view of the ways in which those who live here show up and participate in public life. Drawing on the health metaphor, we can think of our state as having a head, a heart, and hands. Thus, the data in this report illustrate what we know and think, what we believe and feel, and what we do when it comes to engaging with elected officials, neighbors, and community leaders. A close look at the data helps us to understand where our civic life is healthy and thriving, where we may need some healing, and what we might do to stay well in the long run.

The 2020 Index is especially focused on the ways in which different groups engage in civic activities as a function of demographic characteristics such as age, educational achievement, gender, income, and race. We know that different population groups experience varying individual health outcomes; we want to know if that is true when it comes to civic health as well. The central questions that have guided the 2020 Index focus on:

- **How we trust and engage with each other**
- **How we participate in community and politics**
- **How different demographic groups participate in civic life**

Ultimately, we hope that the data in the 2020 Index will inform the general public and policy makers as well as point to areas where we can work to strengthen civic health, especially for those whose voices have been underrepresented in public life when it comes to affecting policy decisions and determining what kind of state we will all live in. We believe that civic health and opportunities for engagement should be equally accessible to all our residents, regardless of their differences. In this way, New Hampshire can be a place where everyone feels that they belong, that their voices are heard, and that opportunities to live, learn, work, and play are available to everyone.

The data reviewed in the 2020 Index were all collected prior to the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. The data reflect people's behavior and attitudes during more "normal" times. We expect that a similar snapshot focused on civic health taken during the height of stay-at-home orders, school closures, spiking unemployment rates, and barricaded public spaces would produce different results. Eventually, there will be a "new normal" as the pandemic subsides. One way to think about the data reported here is to see it as a reminder and baseline for what civic health can look like. And the ways in which the pandemic has heightened attention to social and economic disparities can help us attend to disparities in civic health, too. In that sense, the timing of the 2020 Index matters even more than we anticipated when we began the work.

A Civic Health Advisory Council assisted with the initial framing and subsequent recommendations contained in the Civic Health Index. Members include:

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## WHAT IS CIVIC HEALTH?

In this report, as in the 2012 edition, we define civic health as “distinct from, yet interconnected with, other forms of well-being, including physical and mental health and access to basic needs for food, shelter, and clothing.”

Civic health refers specifically to the ways in which residents of a community (or state) participate in civic activities that strengthen social capital, enhance interconnections, build trust, help each other, talk about public issues and challenges, volunteer in government and non-profit organizations, stay informed about their communities, and participate directly in crafting solutions to various social and economic challenges. Civic health is related to and supported by civic learning processes, which Rajiv Vinnakota of the Institute for Citizens and Scholars<sup>4</sup> defines as:

- **Volunteering**
- **Participation in community decision-making processes (council hearings, etc.)**
- **Learning from multiple and diverse sources of news to formulate an opinion on public policy**
- **Letters to the editors**
- **Belonging to civic service organizations, including religious institutions**
- **Philanthropic support and engagement**
- **Political engagement with political parties, election processes, ballot initiatives, and advocacy**

## REPORT OVERVIEW

The 2020 New Hampshire Civic Health Index draws on data available from the most recent U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey supplements on voting and volunteering and civic engagement.<sup>5</sup> Data analysis for these sources was provided by the National Conference on Citizenship, our partner in the production and design of this Index.<sup>6</sup> We drew additional data from the UNH Granite State Poll (October, 2019)<sup>7</sup> and the recent publication by the Carsey School of Public Policy, *What is New Hampshire?*<sup>8</sup>, as well as the November, 2019 Carsey School Brief, *New Hampshire Demographic Trends in an Era of Economic Turbulence*.<sup>9</sup>

A significant addition to the 2020 Index is the replication the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey commissioned in 2000 by the Saguaro Seminar.<sup>10</sup> The Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey has been conducted in states across the nation, including in New Hampshire in 2001. In the fall of 2019, we asked the UNH Survey Center to replicate many of the questions in the 2000 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey. Thus, we are able to report on changes in trust and social capital in New Hampshire between 2001 and 2019. The Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey measures trust and social capital, as well as barriers to engagement. Measuring trust is one way of taking our civic pulse, along with other indicators that can give us a holistic view of the Granite State.

In the UNH Granite State Poll, we also asked original questions about civics education, knowing how to get involved and participate in problem-solving in one’s community, and how much people feel they matter to their community (modified from the New Hampshire Youth Risk Behavior Survey<sup>11</sup>).

We should note that the data we draw on help us to understand the state as a whole, in the aggregate. While this report presents data about some segments of the population, and the ways in which they may be similar or different with respect to engagement and participation, the use of U.S. Census Bureau data does not allow us to describe civic health at the local, municipal level. Unfortunately, statewide data are limited with respect to illustrating differences across racial and ethnic identities, due to the relatively small sample sizes available in the Current Population Survey. When such data are available, we include that. But we recognize the need for more focused examination of race and ethnicity in order to better understand how all of us participate in public life, including those who have moved to New Hampshire in recent years from other states or nations. So this initial exploration may warrant further data collection and analysis to understand intersections between race, ethnicity, income, educational levels, and civic health.

### Types of Civic Health Highlighted in This Report

The 2020 New Hampshire Civic Health Index highlights three kinds of civic life.

**Civic awareness and engagement**—How people become aware of what is going on in their communities and engage in formal and informal opportunities to participate in community activities, particularly in interaction with public institutions and public officials.

**Connecting in community**—How people connect with each other in community outside of institutions, such as in neighborhoods, and how trust is a key component of those connections

**Volunteering and giving**—How people give back to their communities through volunteering and making charitable contributions

The core of the data analysis in this report is organized according to the sections above. For each of these, we examine how New Hampshire is doing compared both to our own historical state trends as well as to other states. We show how various forms of civic activity relate to other indicators (for example, receiving some form of civics education predicts a higher likelihood of voting). And we look especially at differences in civic activity as a function of demographic differences, with an eye toward disparities across age, income, education level, gender, and place of residence.<sup>12</sup> The report ends with reflections about how to maintain and strengthen civic health in New Hampshire and mitigate the disparities that affect some groups more than others.

## What Matters Most—A Brief Overview of Civic Health in New Hampshire

You will find a wealth of data in this report regarding civic health and its correlates. In light of our research questions and the data we reviewed, we can point to six major themes that result from our analysis.

**Theme 1: Demographics affect civic health.** We found that different demographic designations had effects on civic health including education, age, income, and geographic locations where individuals lived in the state.

**Theme 2: New Hampshire ranks strong in voting when compared with U.S. averages, but our voter habits have fluctuated in the past decade, and vary by demographics, particularly education and income.** Those with a college degree were more likely to vote, and less educated and lower income people were less likely to vote and more likely to experience obstacles that made it difficult for them to participate in civic life.

**Theme 3: Overall, Granite Staters' trust is declining, both in public institutions and in each other.** One of the most significant changes we found in the 2020 Index was the noticeable decline in trust in neighbors, government, and local media, compared to prior years. Trust in the national government has declined by half since 2001, from 30 percent to 14 percent; trust in local government has declined as well, from 52 percent to 44 percent in the same time period. Our trust is connected to other variables such as our sense of mattering in our communities, whether we vote, and other key indicators of civic health.

**Theme 4: Education is the most consistent, stable predictor of civic behavior of all types.** We examined educational achievement (type of educational degree attained), and we specifically asked to what extent residents have received civics education in school. We found relationships among education variables (education levels and receiving civics education), and virtually all other civic health variables including voting, knowing how to become engaged in one's community, and whether one believes they matter to their community.

**Theme 5: Income impacts civic health in some differing ways, and working class people in particular demonstrate an interesting mix of engagement behaviors.** One's income is highly related to whether and how one participates in civic life, but in differing ways. Higher income people tended to vote more, connect more with family and friends, and connect more with people of a different racial or ethnic group. Those in the lowest income group were the most likely to do a favor for a neighbor or help others out. Low-income individuals were also most likely to connect with neighbors. We also found that those in the lower middle-income group were more likely to engage with the news and contact a public official than other income groups. At the same time, lower middle-income individuals were least likely to vote compared to others.

**Theme 6: Age matters, and Millennials overall struggle in achieving strong civic health.** People of different ages participate in public life to different degrees and in different ways. Those who are considered "millennials" (born between 1981 and 1996) are less likely in general to be civically engaged and vote than other age cohorts. There is evidence from a recent survey of 20- to 40-year old New Hampshire residents that one-fifth to one-quarter have no family or friends living nearby. In a survey conducted by Stay Work Play New Hampshire, almost one-third of those responding indicated that they would probably or definitely move out of state within two years.<sup>13</sup> Since this age cohort is critical to New Hampshire's long term civic and economic health, this is an important finding.

Each of these key variables will be addressed in greater detail throughout the report.

## WHO ARE WE:

### Understanding New Hampshire's Demographic Composition

**We are small.** New Hampshire is one of the smallest states in the country as a function of both geographic size and population. Our population in 2018 was 1.36 million people, making us the ninth smallest state in the United States. This represents a 3% increase since 2000, a modest gain, especially compared to our growth in previous decades.<sup>14</sup>

**We are old.** We are the second oldest state in the country, with a median age of 43. We are “top heavy” with more residents over 65 and fewer young adults compared to other states.<sup>15</sup>

**We are from away.** Only 42% of New Hampshire residents were born here, much lower than the New England and national averages.<sup>16</sup>

**We are diverse.** We are an increasingly diverse state. Hispanic, Asian, and African-American residents all tripled in number between 2000 and 2017. In 2016, 14% of all residents below 18 years old belonged to communities of color. In Manchester and Nashua, more than 30% of those below 18 are young people of color. These youngsters are New Hampshire's future, and they will play a significant role in our future civic health.<sup>17</sup>

**Some of us have high incomes, others do not.** We are a relatively wealthy state, consistently ranked among the top ten states in the country measured by household income. Our overall poverty rates are among the lowest in the United States (less than 8% poverty rate in New Hampshire vs. 11.8% nationwide). As in other states, our childhood poverty rate of 11% is higher than the rate for the general population.<sup>18</sup>

**Childhood poverty varies considerably by region.** Children in Coös County and the southwest region of the state have poverty rates two to three times higher than that of children in other regions. Five counties (Coös, Cheshire, Grafton, Strafford, and Sullivan) have overall poverty rates of 10% or higher.<sup>19</sup> Hispanic and African-American residents have poverty rates twice as high as white residents.<sup>20</sup> Ten percent of non-Hispanic white children in New Hampshire live in poverty compared to 24% of Hispanic children who live in poverty.<sup>21</sup> Over one-third of single female-headed households with children under five live below the poverty line.





**The gap between the rich and poor is growing.** Income inequality within New Hampshire is relatively high, and it is increasing rapidly. Based on one accepted measure of income inequality, the Gini index, between 2010 and 2019 New Hampshire had the second-highest increase in income inequality in the United States, second only to Wyoming. By contrast, Vermont has had almost no increase in income inequality in the same time period.<sup>22</sup>

**We are well educated.** Residents of New Hampshire are well educated compared to the rest of the country; 36.5% of the population holds a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 32% in the United States.<sup>23</sup>

**Race matters.** Measures of health and income vary considerably in New Hampshire when comparing the experiences of different racial and ethnic demographic groups. For example, 14.6% fewer African-Americans hold a bachelor's degree than Whites in New Hampshire. The paychecks of African-Americans in New Hampshire are 39% smaller than those of Whites, one of the largest income gaps among the 50 states.<sup>24</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has also disproportionately impacted communities of color. In early May, 2020, the rate of infection for Whites, who constitute 90% of the state's population, was 76.4%; for Hispanics/Latinos, who constitute 3.9% of the population, the infection rate was 7.4%; for African-Americans, who constitute 1.5% of the population, the infection rate was 5.4%.<sup>25</sup>

**Opportunity is connected to education.** New Hampshire's public education system, a bedrock of civic health and opportunity, reflects regional differences tied to local property wealth, a function of how we fund our schools. Related to both local real estate values and community size, per pupil spending ranges from around \$12,000 in some districts to \$35-40,000 in others.<sup>26</sup> Student experiences may vary with these different levels of investment, which in turn can have consequences for their later participation in public life.

These metrics tell us that New Hampshire is experienced in various ways by its diverse residents. Opportunities to thrive, to be a contributing member of one's community, to feel welcome and included are not the same regardless of where one lives or works or one's social identity. The 2020 Index unpacks some of these differences as they relate to engagement, social capital, and how our residents interact with and trust each other.



## KEY FINDINGS

### Successes and Areas of Growth

New Hampshire has some things to celebrate when it comes to the strength of its civic health. The Granite State ranked:

- **Second in the nation in charitable giving of \$25 or more in the past year**
- **Fifth in the nation in voting in the 2016 election**
- **Fifth in the nation in connecting regularly with friends and family**
- **Sixth in attending public meetings**
- **Seventh in talking about important political, societal, or local issues with friends and family**

There was a large disparity between what Granite Staters did civically with friends and family compared with what they did with their neighbors.

In addition,

- **Granite Staters volunteered at the highest rates measured since 2002**
- **The majority of New Hampshire residents feel they matter to their community and can make an impact**
- **In midterm elections in 2018, the state achieved the highest voter turnout since 1978**

*However, there are aspects of our civic health that need attention, as well as some warning signs that our civic health could be at risk in the future.*

Although Granite Staters demonstrated relatively strong civic health in categories such as Volunteering and Giving (p. 37) and Civic Awareness and Engagement (p. 15), residents displayed more of a mixed bag in Connecting in Community (p. 30). Voter turnout has declined in the last two presidential elections, 2012 and 2016. Since 2001, trust in the national government has fallen dramatically, and trust in local government and local news media is also declining. Granite Staters reported that they feel more barriers to engagement than they did in 2001. There was a large disparity between what Granite Staters did civically with friends and family compared with what they did with their neighbors. For example:

- **Granite Staters ranked in the top ten in the nation for connecting with friends and family regularly (5th) and talking about political, societal, or local issues with friends and family (7th)**
- **Granite Staters ranked toward the bottom in the nation when it came to connecting with neighbors regularly (38th), talking with neighbors about political, societal, or local issues (33rd), and doing favors for neighbors (40th).<sup>27</sup> Part of this disparity may relate to trust in those outside one's immediate social circle—since 2001, Granite Staters' trust in their neighbors has also declined.**

New Hampshire ranked in the bottom five states in the nation in terms of connecting with people of different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds (46th).

New Hampshire residents ranked very low compared with national averages in terms of:

- **Posting their views about political, societal, or local issues online (38th).**
- **Helping out friends or extended family with food, housing, or money (45th).**
- **New Hampshire ranked in the bottom five states in the nation in terms of connecting with people of different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds (46th).**

We noticed six key themes in our analysis of New Hampshire Civic Health Index data.

## Theme 1: Demographics Affect Civic Health

It is clear that the demographic characteristics of our residents have a relationship to civic health, a finding consistent with the 2012 New Hampshire Civic Health Index. In particular, education levels and age appear to have a large impact on Granite Staters' civic health. Income affects civic health in different ways—although higher income individuals tend to vote more often, give financially, or volunteer more, lower income individuals tend to help out their neighbors more. Other variables, like where people live, their political identity, and if they had experienced civics education in school also seemed to impact civic health in varying ways. What this suggests is that not everyone has access to civic health in the same ways—for instance, the personal circumstances for people (such as disposable income or time they have to spend on non-work or family responsibilities) and the way systems are constructed (such as how voting opportunities may conflict with work schedules or access to transportation) have a bearing on both how motivated and able people are to contribute to the civic health of their communities.

## Theme 2: Voting Trends and Potential Obstacles to Being Civically Engaged

The 2020 New Hampshire Civic Health Index presents three interesting voting trends to consider:

- **First, although our voting rates in all types of elections are stronger than national averages, from 2004 to 2016 we saw a steady decline in presidential election voter turnout.**
- **Second, despite a decline in presidential election voter turnout, in the last midterm elections in 2018 we saw the highest level of turnout since 1978.<sup>28</sup>**
- **Third, in the most recent presidential election of 2020, 73 percent of New Hampshire's voting age population turned out—the highest turnout since 1964.<sup>29</sup>**

These declines and increases in voting have mirrored national trends, although the spike in midterm election voting was more pronounced in New Hampshire than were national averages. It is important to note that this report was completed in December of 2020, we were not able to mine the 2020 voter turnout data for demographic distinctions, so as future researchers examine who in New Hampshire voted in the 2020 presidential election, we may have more insight into presidential election voter trends in both New Hampshire and the nation.

Even with our overall strong voter turnout, based on voter data from the past decade, we have reasons to be concerned about voting in New Hampshire. Those with a college degree are much more likely to vote than are those with only a high school degree, and the more education one has, the more likely one is to vote. People with a high income—who make \$75,000 or more—were much more likely than people with a very low income—\$35,000 or less—to vote. But what is interesting is that although lower income and lower educated groups often get stereotyped as being unable or unmotivated to participate in civic life, our data suggest this is not the case—for instance, when it comes to doing favors for neighbors and helping out friends or extended family, low-income people do this more than any other income group.

Our data indicate that less educated and lower income people are less likely to vote or engage in other ways due to specific obstacles that make them less able to participate in civic life. A striking ninety-seven percent (97%) of New Hampshire residents who did not vote in 2016 also reported that work schedules or inadequate childcare created obstacles or barriers to their community engagement. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of New Hampshire residents who did not vote in 2016 reported that a lack of transportation was a barrier to their community engagement. The majority of people who did not vote in 2016 also reported they experienced barriers to participating in civic life such as feeling unwelcome, lacking the needed information, or feeling they could not make a difference. People who did not vote in 2016 were less likely to feel they mattered to their community or that people like themselves could make an impact on making their community better.

**97%**

of NH residents who did not vote in 2016 also reported work schedules or inadequate childcare as obstacles to engagement.

## Theme 3: Declining Trust

*Note: The data below were collected in the fall of 2019, prior to the pandemic as well as protests directed at law enforcement, so it may be helpful for the reader to consider that trust in institutions and neighbors may have been further eroded by events in 2020.*

New Hampshire residents' trust in public institutions is declining. Since 2001, trust in the national government has fallen by half. Trust is also declining in local government and local media outlets, though not as rapidly as the decline in trust of the national government. This declining trust signals a period of insecurity in New Hampshire—where public institutions may need to work to demonstrate they are reliable and effective entities that Granite Staters can count on.

Further, New Hampshire residents' trust in their neighbors has declined. There are many factors that may be at play to explain this decline in trust, including our national and local political polarization and volatility, stresses about finances and the economy, and an influx of newcomers to the state. New Hampshire is becoming more racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse than ever before. However, we rank in the bottom five states when it comes to how frequently we interact with people of a different racial, ethnic, or cultural background than ourselves—which may speak both to opportunities to interact with others as well as our willingness to do so. Within some demographic groups, these trends are magnified further. New Hampshire residents 18-34 years old trust their neighbors much less than other age groups. Older generations are less likely to interact with people from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds than their own. However, New Hampshire has the second oldest population in the nation—so many of our residents fall within this “older” demographic.

In other words, the above dynamics point to civic health risk factors. If younger people are not trusting their neighbors, and older people are not frequently interacting with people from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds at the same time that our major population centers are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, this could lay the ground for discrimination, misunderstanding, and potential conflict among people different from each other in New Hampshire communities. The reflections section at the end of this report will speak to this dynamic.

New Hampshire residents 18-34 years old trust their neighbors much less than other age groups.

## Theme 4: Education Is a Critical Ingredient to Strong Civic Health

Education overwhelmingly makes a difference in the way Granite Staters participate and take action in political and civic life in their communities, as well as how they connect with others. This finding is consistent both with New Hampshire's history—we came to similar conclusions in the 2012 New Hampshire Civic Health Index—and with national trends related to civic health.<sup>30</sup> On virtually all of the civic health indicators, Granite Staters who had a college education tended to demonstrate stronger levels of civic health than did those with a high school degree. There were only two indicators where this was not true—people with a high school degree tended to do more when it came to doing favors for neighbors, and they also do more when it comes to helping out friends and extended family.

New Hampshire residents who hold a college degree are much more likely to vote and attend public meetings. They are also much more likely to feel they can make a positive impact and that they matter to their community.

Further, our data suggest that civics education also makes a significant difference in the ability to navigate and participate effectively in civic life. For instance, New Hampshire residents who received civics education in school are much more likely to

- **Trust the local media and local government**
- **Know how to get involved and participate in problem solving in their community**
- **Feel they matter to people in their community**
- **Feel that people like themselves can make an impact in their community**

It also appears that civics education is associated in several ways with more effective participation in civic life. A significant 80% of Granite Staters who identified “a lack of information or not knowing where to start” as a barrier to their community engagement also reported that they had not received civics education in school.

Since education levels can be a proxy for social class and income, it might lead one to jump to the conclusion that civic health is related to social class—and those with more wealth and higher incomes and more education might also be those who exhibit higher levels of civic participation. However, this may not be the case. Although for some civic health indicators, income appears to be associated with stronger civic health, there is considerable variability in how income relates to New Hampshire’s civic life, and in fact lower income people demonstrated strengths on several civic indicators. But without a doubt, education (both achievement and access to civics education) influences Granite Staters’ civic habits, attitudes, and subsequent participation in their communities.

## Theme 5: Income Impacts Civic Health in Differing Ways, and Working Class People Demonstrate High Political Engagement but Low Engagement in Other Outcomes

One’s income is highly related to whether and how one participates in civic life. Higher income people tended to vote more, connect more with family and friends, and connect more with people of a different racial or ethnic group. Higher income Granite Staters, those who make \$75,000 or more, showed the highest levels of civic health overall.<sup>31</sup> Those in the lowest income group were the most likely to do a favor for a neighbor or help others out.

But lower middle-income people in New Hampshire, presumably lots of individuals in “working class” occupations, demonstrate some intriguing civic trends. Although this population is highly engaged politically, they participate at lower levels in other civic behaviors such as voting in national elections, volunteering, and financial giving. These individuals, who earn between \$35,000 to \$49,999, led all income groups in five categories including:

- **Engaging with news by reading, watching, or listening to news or information about political, societal, or local issues**
- **Posting views online about political, societal, or local issues**
- **Talking with friends and family about political, societal, or local issues**
- **Talking with neighbors about political, societal, or local issues**
- **Interacting with public officials to express their opinion**

In other words, lower middle-income Granite Staters are paying attention to the news, talking about it with others, sharing their views with public leaders and with their broader networks online. Lower middle-income New Hampshire residents also demonstrated strengths in attending public meetings and connecting with people of different racial, ethnic, or cultural groups.

However, although lower middle-income people in New Hampshire show up for local elections, when it comes to midterm or presidential voting, they participate less often than other income groups. Further, lower middle-income Granite Staters demonstrate a mixed bag of results when connecting in community and volunteering. Lower middle-income Granite Staters are also less likely to participate in groups or volunteer on a regular basis or engage in political or charitable giving.

This gap in participation raises important questions—why are lower middle-income New Hampshire residents more likely to think and talk about politics but less likely to vote in national elections? We did not have access to sufficient longitudinal data to determine if lower middle-income Granite Staters’ behavior has changed in recent years, or if their behavior is indicative of longer-term trends. But what we can determine from this data is that lower middle-income people in New Hampshire are interested in contemporary issues. Lower levels of activity in areas such as charitable giving and voting may be related to having less discretionary income and working in occupations that do not allow the flexibility or access needed to vote during weekday polling hours, not because of disinterest or lack of will. However, lower middle income individuals do vote locally, which suggests there may be other explanations for this disparity between engagement and voting in national elections.

# 80%

of Granite Staters who identified “a lack of information or not knowing where to start” as a barrier to their community engagement also reported that they had not received civics education in school.

Lower middle-income Granite Staters are paying attention to the news, talking about it with others, sharing their views with public leaders and with their broader networks online.

## Theme 6: Millennials Overall Struggle in Achieving Strong Civic Health

People of different ages participate in public life to different degrees and in different ways. Although Millennials demonstrate strengths in a few civic health indicators, overall Millennials rank below other generations in their civic awareness and engagement, connections in community, and volunteering and giving. Millennials participate in public life through posting online and volunteering. However, Millennials demonstrate lower rates than other generations in:

- **Voting in all types of elections**
- **Paying attention to news**
- **Trusting, helping, and connecting with neighbors**
- **Going to public meetings**
- **Engaging with public officials**
- **Trusting local media**
- **Belonging to groups, such as recreational groups, civic or service organizations, spiritual communities, and political groups**
- **Giving to charitable or political causes**
- **Knowing how to get involved and participate in local problem solving**
- **Feeling they matter to their community**

Younger people in New Hampshire report higher rates of experiencing barriers or obstacles to civic engagement compared to other generations.

Younger people in New Hampshire also report higher rates of experiencing barriers or obstacles to civic engagement compared to other generations.

However, one should not conclude from this data that Millennials do not want to be connected with others—in fact Millennials connect more with friends and family than any other generation. And second only to Generation X, New Hampshire Millennials are interacting more with people from a different racial, ethnic, or cultural background than are Boomers or the Silent and Long Generation—a trend that may be connected to the demographic shifts occurring in the state.

But these results are concerning. If Millennials are not expressing their views to public officials, either by attending meetings or voting, and if they aren't paying attention to news, this suggests that the priorities and needs of Millennials are also likely not being heard by elected decision-makers. Although it is possible that certain dispositions or attitudes of the Millennial generation affect their participation, we should exercise caution before jumping to this conclusion. For instance, our data suggest that younger generations in New Hampshire are less likely to know how to get involved, more likely to experience barriers to participating, and—perhaps most importantly—more likely to feel they do not matter to their community.

It is difficult to know exactly why Millennials are experiencing disparities in civic health, and our recommendations suggest paths to address this trend. It may be that the way civic health measures are structured to not correspond to how Millennials are engaging. It is possible that what we are seeing in New Hampshire corresponds to national studies that suggest American youth are increasingly isolated and report feelings of loneliness more than other generations.<sup>32</sup> The Granite State Poll indicates that New Hampshire youth are also more worried than other generations about drug use in the state.<sup>33</sup> All of this begs the question of the relationship between civic health with mental and physical health. Further, in a culture of unprecedented social isolation due to COVID-19, it is important to consider how fear and a lack of trust in others might continue to erode civic health in the long term.

# CIVIC HEALTH OUTCOMES

The civic health outcomes section is organized around three categories of civic health indicators.

- **Civic awareness and engagement**
- **Connecting in community**
- **Volunteering and giving**

To better understand how civic health is experienced by different populations, we focused on several subgroups. The analyses that follow illustrate the relationship between various kinds of civic activities and specific demographic characteristics. These include:

- **Education achievement level**
- **Income**
- **Place (urban, rural, suburban) and region (Central/Lakes, Connecticut Valley, Manchester Area, Mass Border, North Country, Seacoast)**
- **Gender**
- **Age**

Although examining data on race and ethnicity is incredibly important for understanding how civic experiences vary in New Hampshire, unfortunately due to the small percentages of people of color living in the state, there was not sufficient data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey to draw civic health comparisons by race and ethnicity. The Fall 2019 Granite State Poll did not collect demographic information concerning a respondent's racial and ethnic identification due to the small number of people in New Hampshire who identify with groups other than 'Caucasian/White.' When those data are available from other sources, we include it. In others words, people of color were surveyed in both the Census and Granite State poll data, but the sample sizes were too small to provide reliable demographic analysis by race and ethnicity.

## Civic Awareness and Engagement

### Overview

Civic awareness and engagement refers to how people feel, learn about, and take actions related to political, societal, or local issues. Measures of civic awareness and engagement include:

- **Receiving civics education**
- **Voting, including presidential, midterm, and local elections**
- **Engaging with public officials and attending public meetings**
- **Keeping up with the news and posting views about it online**
- **Trusting government and local media**
- **The degree to which people feel they matter and can make an impact in their communities**
- **Obstacles and barriers to becoming engaged**



## Voting, Public Meetings, Contacting Public Officials, and Engaging with News

Overall, New Hampshire's civic awareness and engagement is strong. Table 1 shows how New Hampshire ranks in comparison to other states.<sup>34</sup>

**Table 1. Civic Awareness and Engagement: New Hampshire Versus U.S.**

Census Indicators of Civic Health	National rank, out of 51 (including DC)	NH Percent	U.S. Average
Voted in the 2016 Presidential Election	5th	69.0%	62.4%
Attended a Public Meeting	6th	16.1%	10.7%
Contacted a Public Official	11th	16.6%	11.4%
Engaged with the News	15th	78.4%	75.0%
Voted in the 2018 Midterm Election	16th	56.2%	53.4%
Voted in the 2018 Local Elections	25th	52.8%	48.3%
Published or Expressed Views Online	38th	5.8%	7.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017) and Voting in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2018).

## Trust in Government and Media, Civics Education, Mattering, and Obstacles to Engagement

Data from the UNH Granite State Poll<sup>35</sup> included questions about civic awareness and engagement related to:

- Trust in local government
- Trust in national government
- Trust in local media
- Whether the respondent received a civics education in grade school, such as how government works and how laws are enacted
- Whether respondents think they matter to other people in their community
- How much impact respondents think people like them can have in making their community a better place
- Whether respondents think they know how to become involved and participate in problem-solving in their community
- Whether respondents experience obstacles or barriers that make it difficult for them to be as involved in their community as they would like (including challenges related to work schedules or childcare, transportation, feeling they cannot make a difference, feeling unwelcome, or a lack of information and not knowing how to begin)

Results of the Granite State Poll indicate the following:

- **The majority of New Hampshire residents received civics education in school (81%), feel they matter to their community (76%), feel they can have an impact on making it better (77%), and trust local news media (57%).**
- **New Hampshire residents place some trust in local government (44%) but have much lower levels of trust in national government (14%).**
- **Just under half of New Hampshire residents (48%) say they face obstacles or barriers to community involvement. The most common obstacles are related to work schedules and childcare, inadequate transportation, or a lack of information or knowing how to begin.**

Each of these indicators and findings will be discussed in greater detail later in the report.

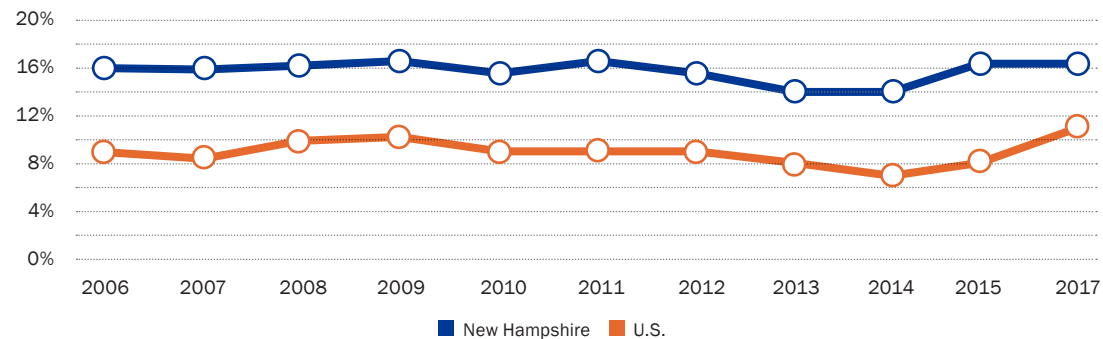


## Comparing Trends Over Time

In this section, we share some of the long-term trends related to civic awareness and engagement. As mentioned in our technical note on page 44, for various reasons we have different start and end points of longitudinal data, some of which has to do with the fact we are working with several different data sets in this report.

Granite Staters attend public meetings at higher rates than the national average, and this has been true for the past decade. See Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Attendance at Public Meetings in New Hampshire Compared to National Averages**



Source: Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey (2017)

When comparing U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey data from 2011 to 2017, civic health indicators have changed in the following ways:

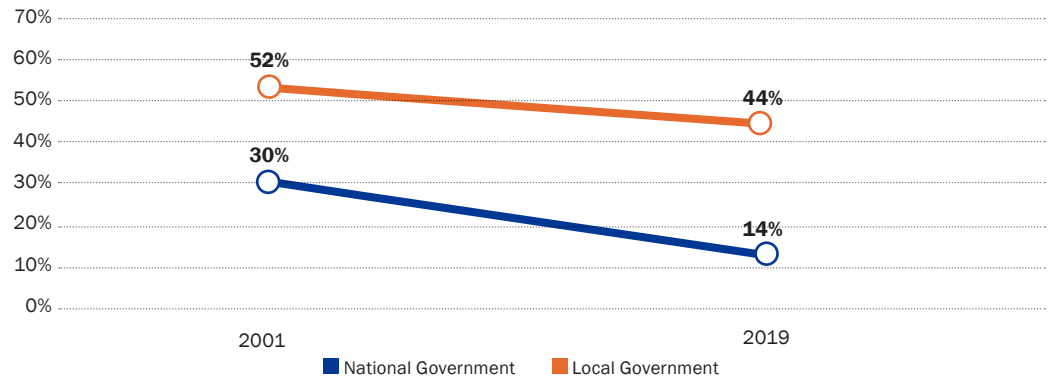
- *We are more connected with friends and family*—Granite Staters are interacting with friends and family nearly 10% more than they were in 2011, up from 79.8% in 2011 to 89.2% in 2017.
- *We are posting online considerably less*—We have declined by nearly half in our use of the internet to express public opinions from 10.6% in 2011 to 5.8% in 2017.
- *We are holding steady in contacting public officials*—New Hampshire residents are contacting public officials at any level of government to express their opinions at about the same rates as they did in 2011 (16.9% in 2011 vs. 16.6% in 2017).
- *We are holding steady in attending public meetings*—Granite Staters attended public meetings at 16.3% in 2011 and 16.1% in 2017.

From 2001 to 2019, changes in the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey indicate the following:

- *We trust national government considerably less than we used to*—Trust in national government has fallen by more than half since 2001. In 2001, 30% of New Hampshire residents reported they trusted their government just “about always or most of the time,” but in 2019 this number declined to 14%. Further, the percent of New Hampshire residents who trust the national government “hardly ever” increased from 14% in 2001 to 40% in 2019.
- *We trust local government less than we used to*—Trust in local government also has declined. In 2001, 52% of New Hampshire residents reported they trust local government; in 2019, this decreased to 44%. Although New Hampshire residents are losing trust in government overall, trust in national government has declined much more rapidly than trust in local government. See Figure 2.

Although New Hampshire residents are losing trust in government overall, trust in national government has declined much more rapidly than trust in local government.

**Figure 2. New Hampshire Residents' Trust in Government All or Most of the Time, 2001-2019**



Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll

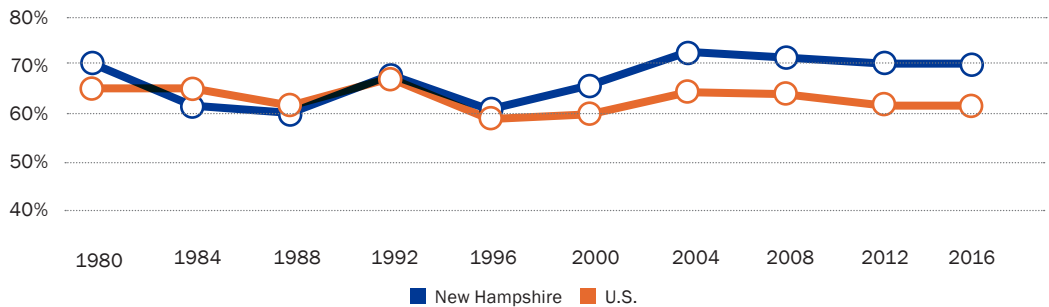
- *We trust local media somewhat less than we used to*—New Hampshire residents' trust in local news media has fallen slightly in the last 18 years. In 2001, 61% of New Hampshire residents trusted the local news media some or a lot. In 2019, that declined to 57%.

### Spotlight on Voting—Presidential, Midterm, and Local Elections

Overall, New Hampshire's voting rates, whether in presidential, midterm, or local elections, are higher than national averages. There are some trends of note in recent years. Compared to prior elections, New Hampshire had the lowest voter turnout in over a decade in the 2016 presidential election, but one of the highest voter turnouts on record in 2020. In the 2018 midterm election, we had the highest voter turnout in forty years. These data suggest that although voting in national elections was declining since 2004, since 2018 we may be trending toward high voter turnout again for presidential and midterm elections.

### Presidential Voting

**Figure 3. Presidential Election Voter Turnout in New Hampshire, 1980-2016**



Source: Voting and Registration in New Hampshire, U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey

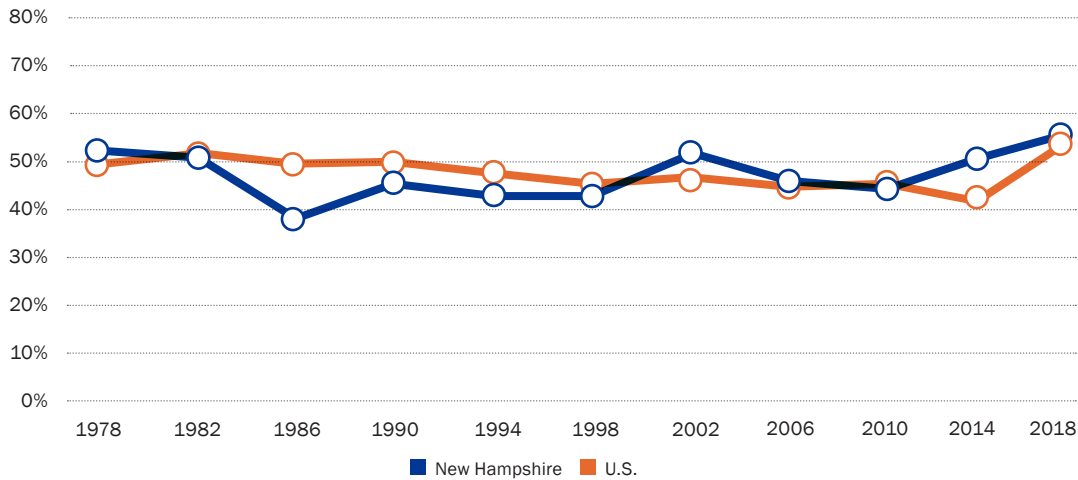
Voter turnout in New Hampshire has been declining moderately since 2004, reflecting national trends. From 1996 to 2004, New Hampshire voter turnout trended upward, and in 2004 voter turnout spiked higher than it had been since 1980. However, since 2008, voter turnout has trended downward. In 2016, voter turnout was the lowest it has been since 2004.

However, New Hampshire still votes in presidential elections at much higher rates than the rest of the nation, with 69% of eligible voters voting in 2016 compared with 61.4% nationally. In the 2016 presidential election, New Hampshire ranked 5th in the nation for voter turnout.

## Midterm Elections

As is true nationally, New Hampshire residents tend to vote at lower rates in midterm elections. In 2018, New Hampshire ranked 16th in the nation in midterm voting and voted slightly more than the national average. Figure 4 shows how voters in New Hampshire and the United States have turned out for midterm elections since 1978.

**Figure 4. Midterm Voter Turnout in New Hampshire, 1978-2018**



Lower middle income groups were more likely to vote in local elections.

Source: Voting and Registration in New Hampshire, U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey

## Overall Trends in New Hampshire Voting

Across all elections:

- Women voted more often than men.
- People over 30 voted significantly more than did people who were 18-29.
- The more education people had, the more likely they were to vote.

There were also a few notable differences in New Hampshire elections, including:

- In 2017, New Hampshire residents voted at higher rates than the national average in local elections for offices such as school board or city council (52.8% vs. 48.3%). We ranked 25th in the nation for voting in local elections.
- There are geographic disparities in voting, particularly for midterm elections. Rural people voted at higher rates than urban and suburban residents in the 2016 national election.
- In the 2018 midterm election, rural people voted at 21 percentage points higher than urban people did, but in the presidential elections, the gap between rural and urban voting was less than 3 percentage points. In local elections, suburban residents voted more than both rural and urban residents.
- In presidential elections, individuals with a higher income were more likely to vote, but there were no clear trends by income in midterm or local elections.
- Similar to national trends, voting in national elections is associated with higher turnout than elections for state or local offices. Presidential-year elections saw the highest turnouts, followed by midterm voting. Local voting drew the lowest turnout. Regardless of year or office, New Hampshire is above national averages in voter turnout.

The more education people had, the more likely they were to vote.

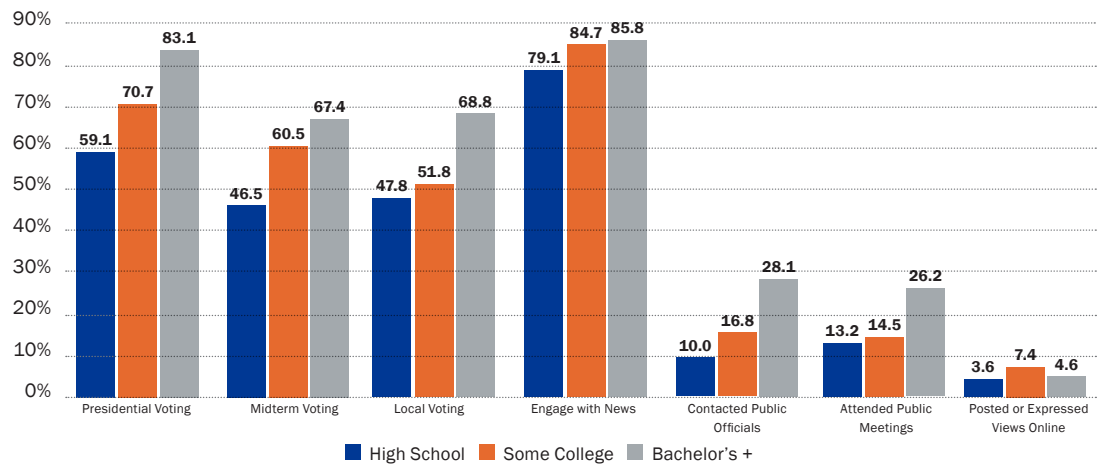
## Trends by Demographics

This section highlights similarities and differences among various population subgroups, as defined by educational achievement, income, residence, age, and gender.

### Education

There was a relationship between education and civic awareness and engagement outcomes. On almost every measure, higher educational achievement levels were associated with higher levels of civic awareness and engagement. Figure 5 shows the relationship between a variety of civic activities and education levels.<sup>36</sup>

**Figure 5. Civic Awareness and Engagement by Education in New Hampshire**

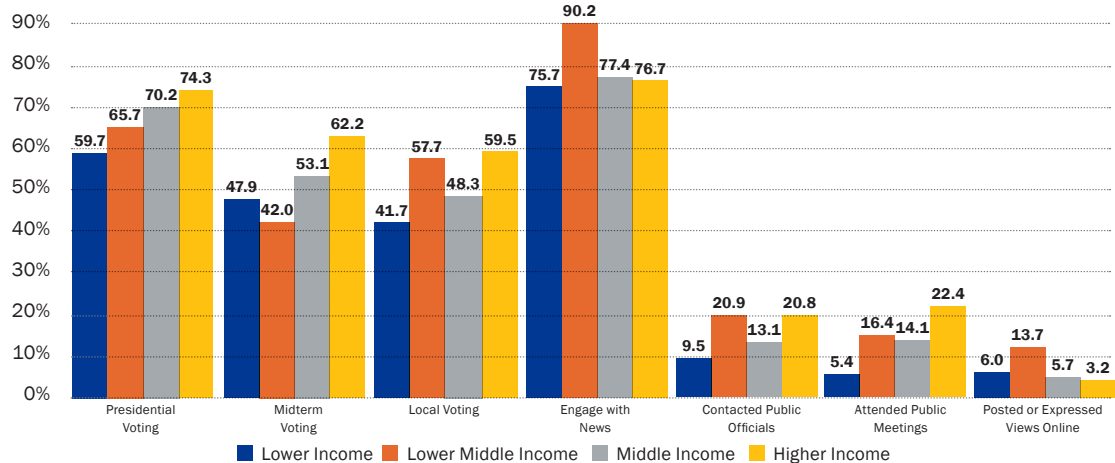


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017) and Voting in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2018 and 2016)

### Income

The relationship between civic awareness and engagement and income yielded more mixed results. As seen in Figure 6, higher and lower middle-income residents<sup>37</sup> demonstrated the strongest civic health outcomes overall, with higher income people more likely to vote in local elections, and attend a public meeting. People in lower middle-income groups are more likely than all others to engage with news, contact a public official, and post views online. They were also more likely than most others to vote in local elections.

**Figure 6. Civic Awareness and Engagement by Income in New Hampshire**



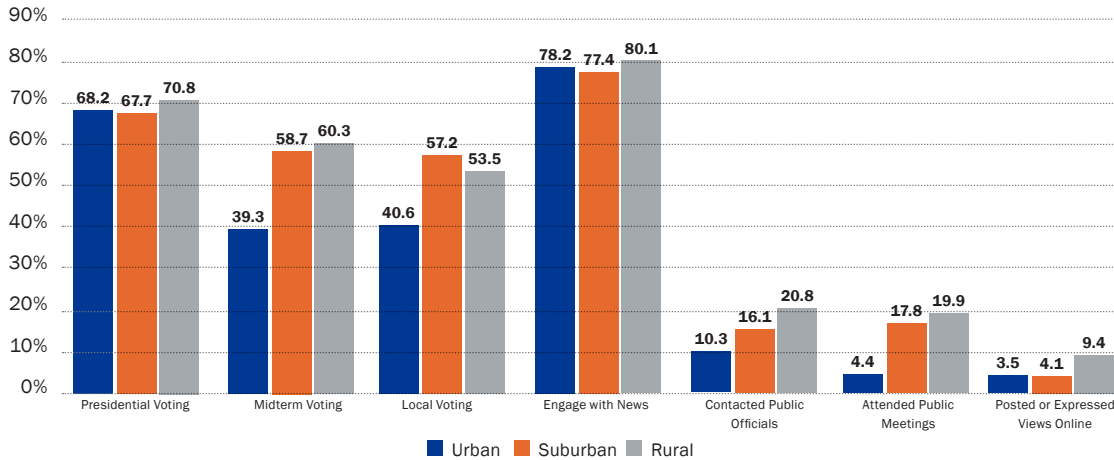
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017) and Voting in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2018 and 2016)

On almost every measure, higher educational achievement levels were associated with higher levels of civic awareness and engagement.

## Region

People living in rural and suburban regions tended to demonstrate higher levels of civic awareness and engagement than did urban residents, as seen in Figure 7. For example, rural residents were more likely to vote in presidential and midterm elections, attend public meetings, engage with public officials, and post views online.

**Figure 7. Civic Awareness and Engagement by Region in New Hampshire**

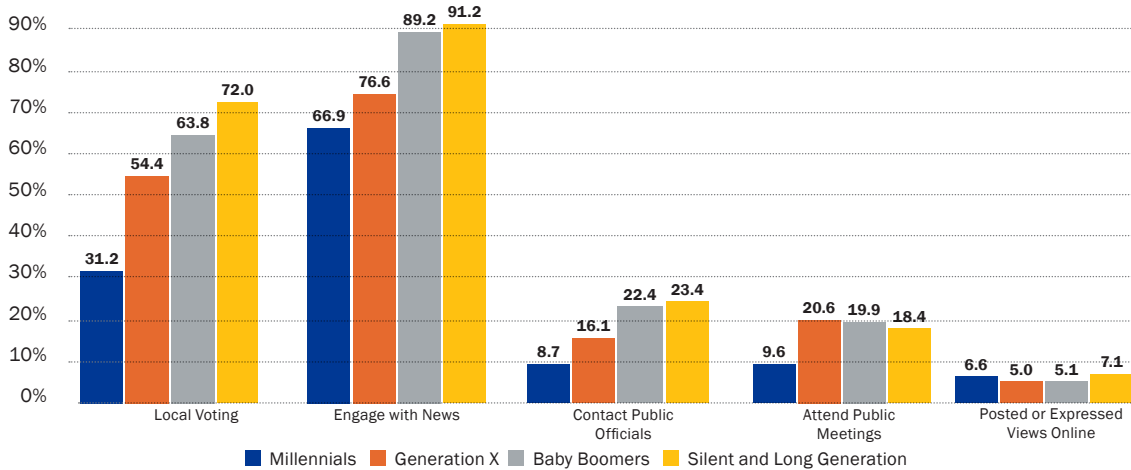


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017) and Voting in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2018 and 2016)

## Age and Generation<sup>38</sup>

Different generations demonstrate varying levels of civic awareness and engagement, as seen in Figure 8:

**Figure 8. Civic Awareness and Engagement by Age in New Hampshire**

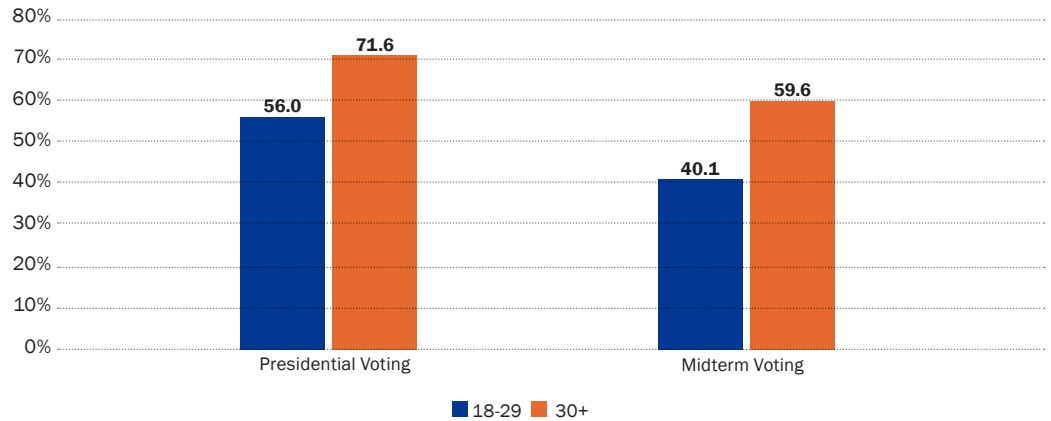


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017) and Voting in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2018 and 2016)

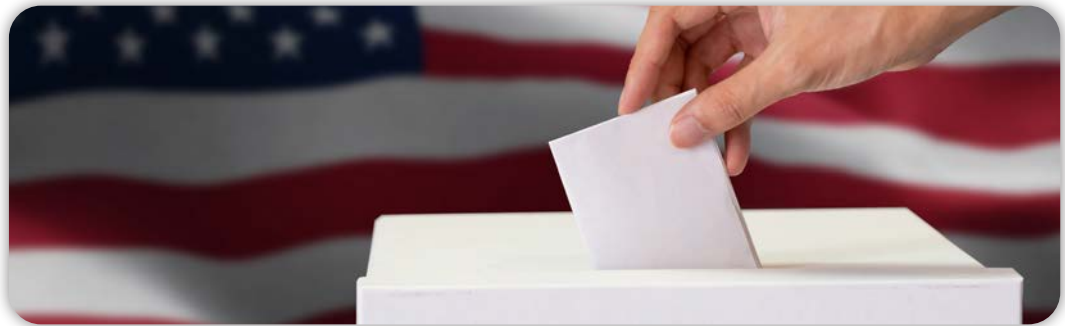
- **Engagement with news tends to increase as age increases**—and the Silent and Long Generation engaged with news at a notable 24 percentage points higher than did Millennials as well as 14.6 percentage points more than Generation Xers.
- **Generation Xers are going to more public meetings**—Generation Xers attend public meetings much more than Millennials and slightly more than Baby Boomers and the Silent and Long Generation.
- **Millennials are contacting public officials at lower rates than other generations**—Generation Xers contact officials 7.4 percentage points more often than Millennials and the Silent and Long Generation does so 14.7 percentage points more often than Millennials.

People under 30 voted at significantly lower rates compared to those who are over 30 in the 2016 presidential and 2018 midterm elections. Generational data were not available for these indicators. See Figure 9.

**Figure 9. Voting by Age in New Hampshire**



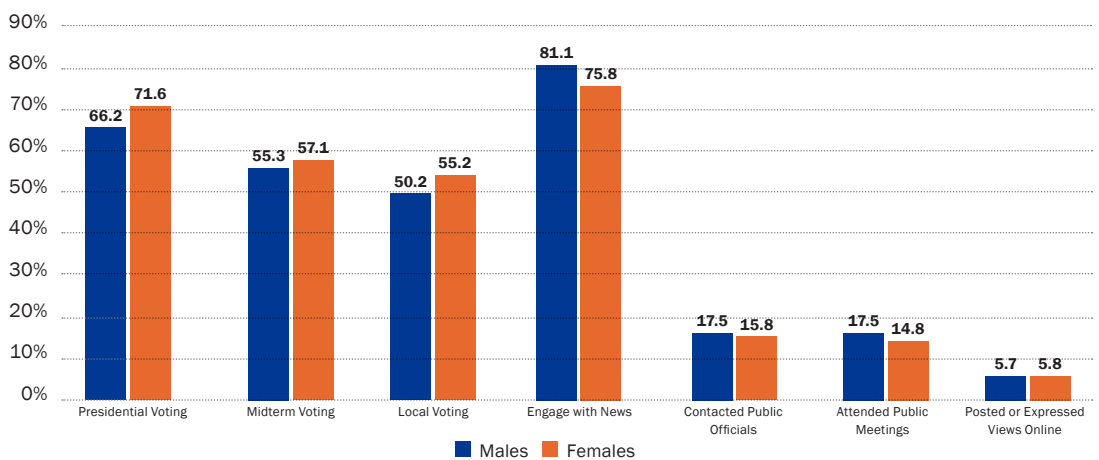
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017) and Voting in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2018 and 2016)



## Gender

**Women and men vary in their civic awareness and engagement**—Women and men demonstrated some differences in civic engagement and awareness. Women voted in local elections more than men did. Men engaged with news more than women and attended public meetings and contacted public officials slightly more. See Figure 10.

**Figure 10. Civic Awareness and Engagement by Gender in New Hampshire**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017) and Voting in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2018 and 2016)

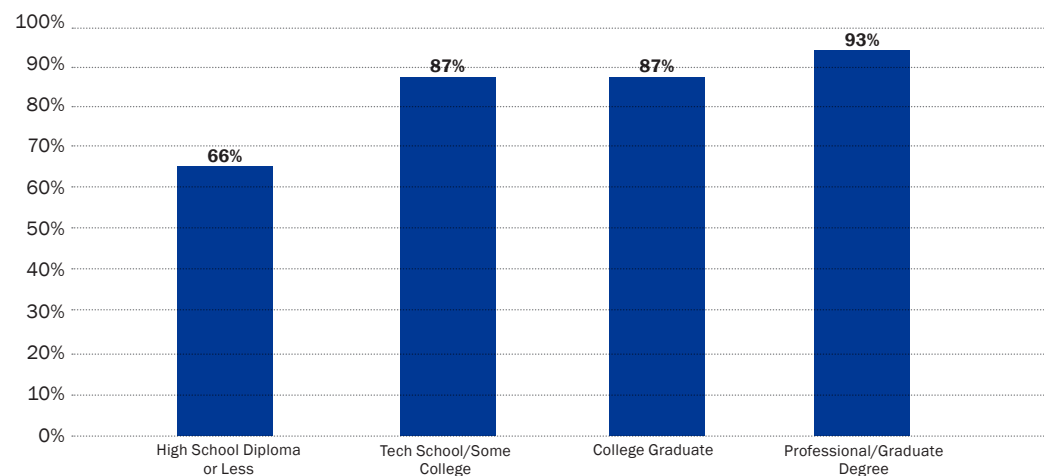
## Civics Education

A large majority (81%) of New Hampshire residents reported that they received education about civics, such as how the government works or how laws are enacted, when they were in elementary or secondary school.

There were a few notable differences among those who reported they had received civics education in school:

- Republicans (87%) were more likely to report that they had received civics education in school than were Democrats (78%) or Independents (84%).
- New Hampshire residents who had received civics education were more likely to vote in the 2016 presidential election (84%) than were residents who had not received civics education (70%).
- There was a relationship between civics education and education levels overall. Those who had a high school education or less reported lower civics education levels than those who were college educated, and the more schooling that people had, the more likely they were to report they had experienced civics education in K-12 school. See Figure 11.

**Figure 11. Civics Education in K-12 School by Education Level in New Hampshire**



Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll

## A Closer Look at Trust in Government and Media

Earlier in the 2020 Index, we reported on the degree to which New Hampshire residents trust local and national government and local media. As with the other indicators, we see differences in who trusts and how much.

### Trust in Government

- Those who report lower levels of trust in government overall include political independents, women, those who attained a high school education or less, people who did not vote in 2016, and North Country residents.
- New Hampshire residents who are right-leaning politically demonstrate higher levels of trust in national government than do independents or left-leaning individuals.
- Those who frequently attend religious services demonstrate more trust in national government.
- Almost half (46%) of people who claim they do not trust the national government also did not vote in 2016. In contrast, 18% of people who claim they do not trust their local government also did not vote in 2016. This suggests trust in national government has more of a relationship to voting than does trust in local government.

Those who frequently attend religious services demonstrate more trust in national government.

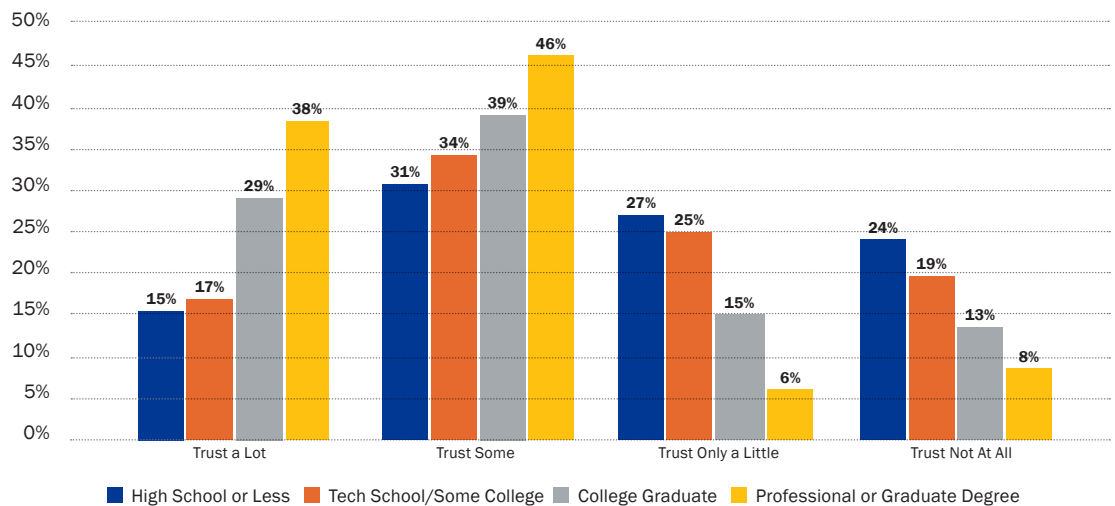
- People who voted demonstrated rates of trust in the both the national and local government about ten percentage points higher than those who didn't vote.<sup>39</sup>
- New Hampshire residents who received civics education (13%) place lower levels of trust in the national government than those who did not receive civics education (20%). Yet, those who did receive civics education (48%) were nearly twice as likely to trust local government than those who did not receive civics education (26%).
- As education levels increase, so does trust in local government. One-third (34%) of New Hampshire residents with a high school education or less trust local government compared with almost two-thirds (61%) who completed a professional or graduate degree.

### Trust in Local Media

- Democrats (74%) were much more likely to trust local media than were Republicans (46%) or Independents (46%).
- Younger people (18-34 years old) were less likely to trust local media than were older generations, and the older that residents were, the more likely they were to trust local media.
- Women trust local media more than men do (64% versus 50%).
- Trust in local media was lower for those who did not vote. Twenty-six percent of people who did not vote in 2016 also indicated they did not trust the local news media, compared with 16% of people who did vote.
- Education levels and trust in local media appear strongly related—the more education people have, the more they trust local media. Those with a professional or graduate degree trusted local media at nearly double the rate (84%) than did those with a high school education or less (46%). See Figure 12.

Democrats were much more likely to trust local media than were Republicans or Independents.

**Figure 12. Trust in Local Media by Education Level in New Hampshire**



Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll

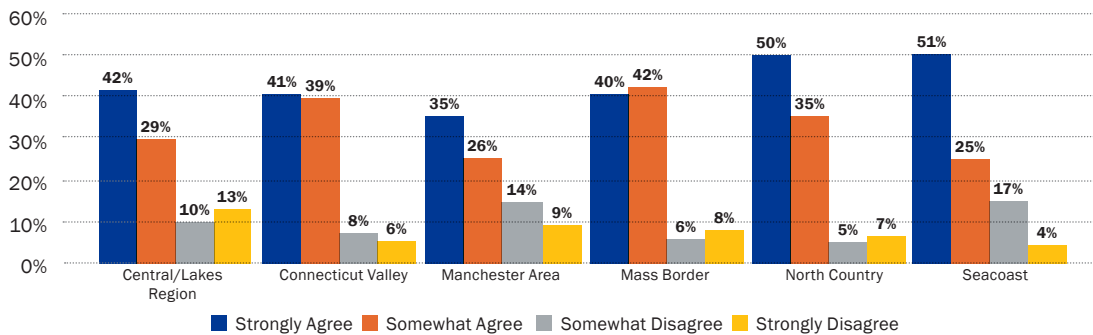
### Mattering to Your Community

For the first time, we asked New Hampshire residents if they believe they matter to their community.<sup>40</sup> A version of this question has been asked in past years on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey administered nationally and in New Hampshire to 8th and 11th graders. For example, in 2017, the statewide average for young people who reported that they believe they matter to their community was 51.4%.<sup>41</sup> We asked adult respondents in 2019 a similar question, thinking there may be a relationship between whether one believes they matter and whether and how they engage in civic life.



Overall, three-quarters (76%) of those surveyed believe they matter to other people in their community. However, feelings of mattering varied depending on the background of the person responding. Those who felt most strongly that they matter were politically right leaning individuals, people over 50 years of age, women, college graduates, and those who live in the North Country. As Figure 13 shows, believing one matters to their community varies somewhat across geographic regions.

**Figure 13. Mattering to Your Community By Region in New Hampshire**



Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll

The relationship between mattering and other indicators is also seen in these findings:

- Those who reported they had received civics education in high school agreed that they matter at much higher rates (80%) than people who did not receive civics education (56%).
- Women believe they matter (79%) somewhat more than men (73%).
- Older generations believe they matter at higher rates than do younger generations. People 50 to 64 years old (81%) or 65 or older (80%) strongly or somewhat agreed they matter more than people who were 35 to 49 (72%) or 18 to 34 (73%).
- Those with a high school education believe they matter at lower rates (65%) than did people with some college or technical school (84%), college graduates (81%), or those with a professional or graduate degree (77%).
- People who voted in 2016 (79%) believe that they matter to their community more than people who did not vote (64%).

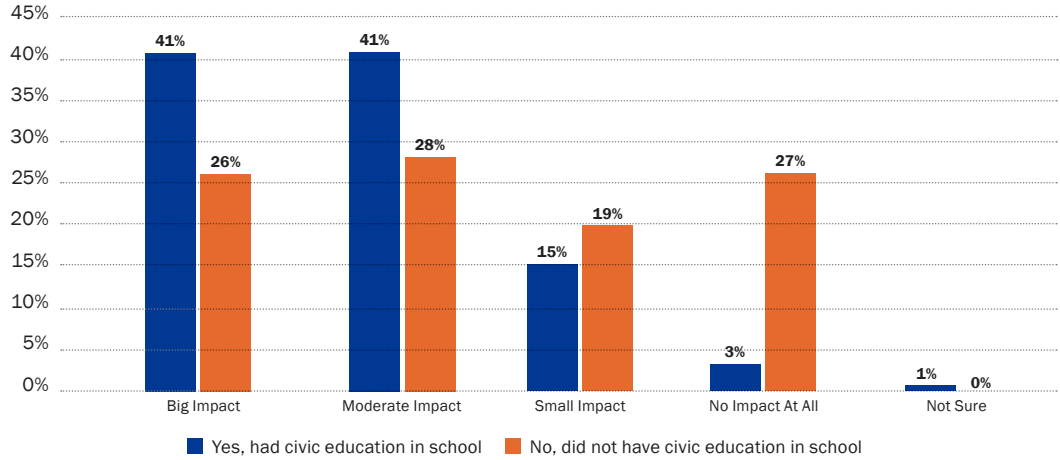
### Impact on Your Community

Over three-quarters (77%) of New Hampshire residents believe that people like themselves can have a big or moderate impact on making their community a better place to live. However, responses varied depending on the background of the individual—for instance, those who felt they could make the most impact include politically left leaning individuals, women, younger or middle-aged people, well-educated people, voters, people in the Seacoast region, those who attend religious services, and those who received civics education.

- Those who did not receive civics education were much less likely to think they could make an impact than those who received civics education. A notable 27% of individuals who did not receive civics education also felt they could make no impact at all on their communities. See Figure 14.

Those who reported they had received civics education in high school agreed that they matter at much higher rates than people who did not receive civics education.

**Figure 14. Impact on Community by Civic Education in School**



Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll

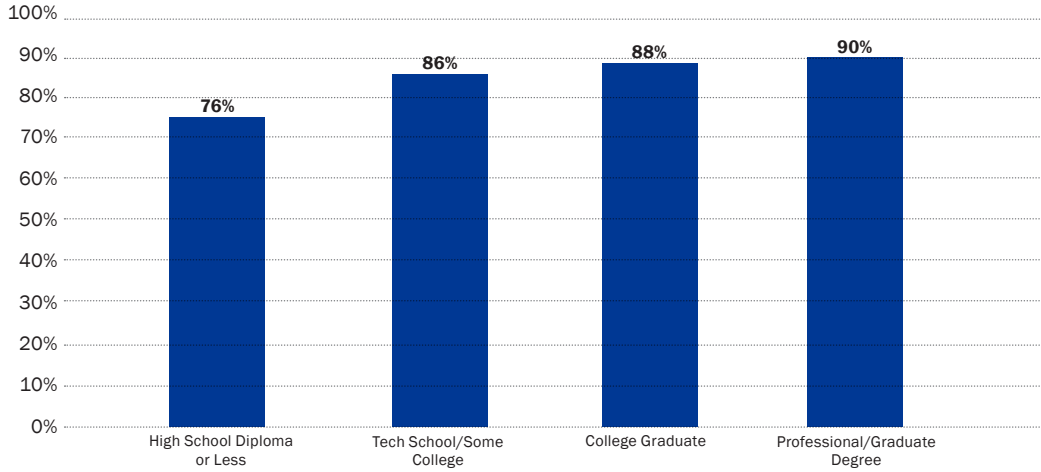
- Women (80%) were more likely than men (74%) to feel they could have a big or moderate impact.
- People who were 18 to 34 and 35 to 49 believe they could have an impact at higher levels (82%) than did those 50 to 64 (71%) or 65 or older (73%).
- There was a relationship between education levels and believing one could make an impact. Those with a high school degree or less believe they could make an impact at much lower levels than those with more education.
- Fifteen percent of those who did not vote in 2016 also believe people like them could make no impact at all on their community, compared with only 5% of people who did vote.
- Those who attend religious services at least weekly believe they could make an impact on their community at higher rates (84%) than those who attend a few times a year (77%) or never (73%).

### Knowing How to Become Involved and Participate in Problem-Solving

A large majority (84%) of New Hampshire residents believe that they know how to become involved and participate in problem-solving in their community. As with other indicators, there was variability:

- Politically right leaning people are more likely than independents or left leaning people to report they know how to become involved and participate.
- People aged 18-34 were less likely than other age groups to report that they know how to get involved and participate in problem-solving.
- Individuals who voted in 2016 (86%) were more likely to respond positively than individuals who did not vote (74%).
- Those who received civics education were more likely (86%) than those who had not (73%) to report they know how to get involved and problem-solve locally.
- Women (86%) were slightly more likely than men (82%) to say they know how to be involved in their communities.
- As education level increases, respondents are more likely to report that they know how to get involved. See Figure 15.

**Figure 15. Involvement in Community by Education in New Hampshire**



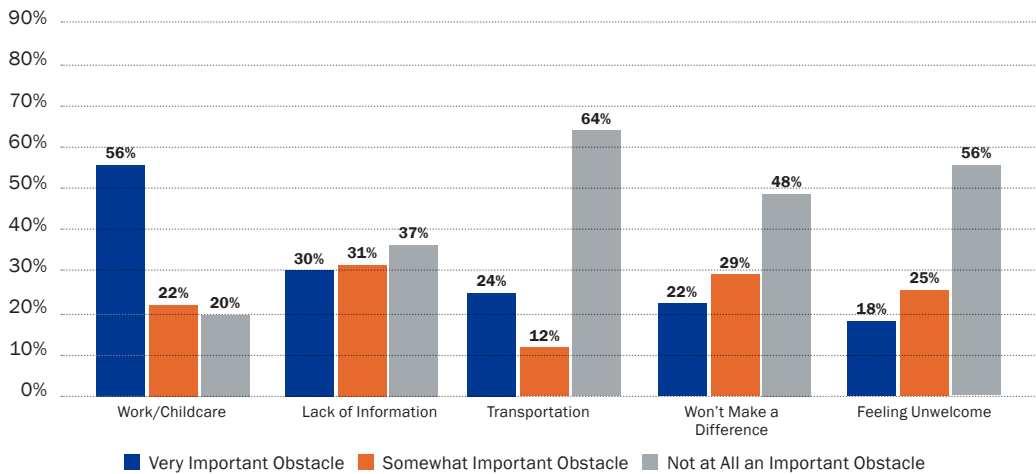
Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll

### Obstacles and Barriers to Engagement

We asked New Hampshire residents if they felt there were obstacles or barriers that make it difficult for them to be as involved with their community as they would like to be. In 2019, just under half of New Hampshire residents (48%) said that they face obstacles or barriers to community involvement, somewhat higher than the proportion who reported facing obstacles or barriers in 2001 (40%).

Those who felt they faced barriers or obstacles were asked whether they experienced any of the following, and to what degree. Figure 16 shows how important those barriers are.

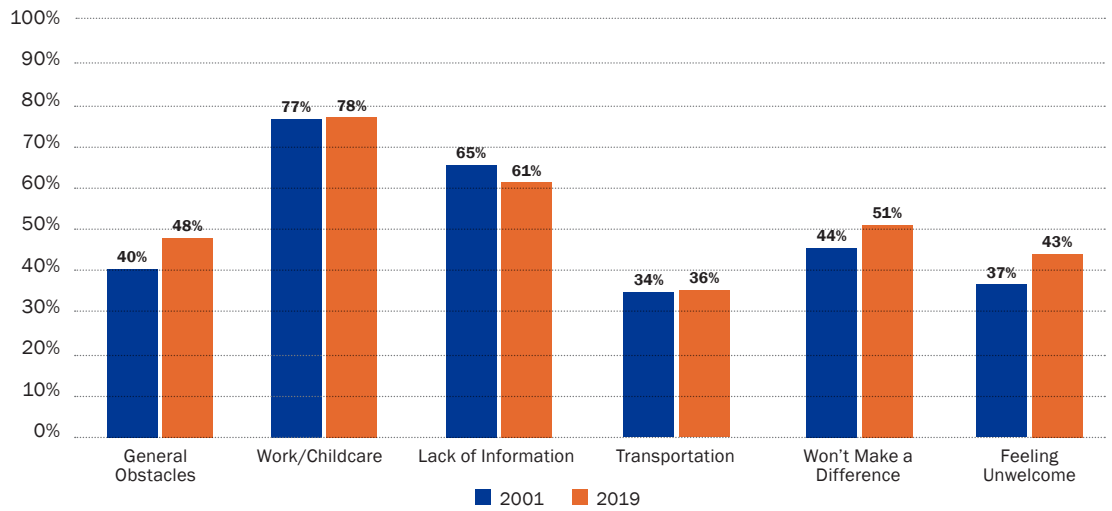
**Figure 16. Obstacles and Barriers to Community Involvement in New Hampshire**



Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll

Figure 17 compares responses in 2001 and 2019 on this question. Generally, residents experienced greater barriers to engagement in the 2019 survey, with the exception of “lack of information.”

**Figure 17. Obstacles and Barriers to Community Involvement, 2001 Compared to 2019**



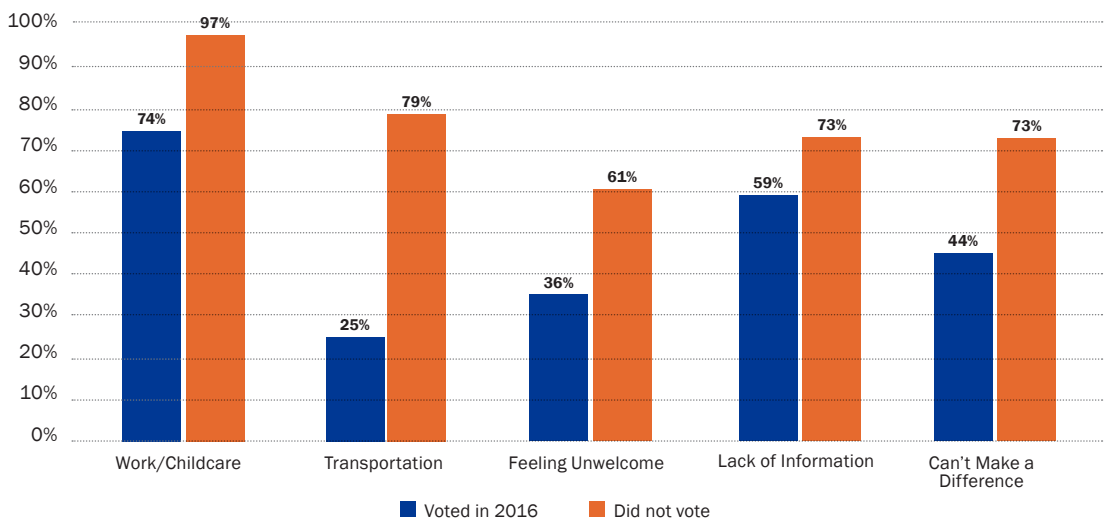
Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll

### How Voting Connects with Barriers and Obstacles

Almost all of the people who did not vote in 2016 reported that work schedules or childcare issues were obstacles in their community involvement.

There was a notable relationship between those who did not vote in 2016 and those who reported that they experienced barriers or obstacles to getting involved in their community. Fifty-three percent of those who did not vote in 2016 felt there were obstacles and barriers that made it difficult for them to become as involved in their community as they would like, compared with 47% of people who did vote. Figure 18 shows the relationship between voting and obstacles/barriers. Of particular note is the fact that almost all of the people who did not vote in 2016 (97%) reported that a demanding or inflexible work schedule or childcare issues was an obstacle in their community involvement. People who did not vote in 2016 were also more likely to report transportation as a barrier to engaging in their community. In general, we see a relationship between voting behavior and experiencing barriers to other forms of civic engagement.

**Figure 18. Relationship Between Voting and Barriers to Community Involvement**



Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll



### *Other Trends Related to Obstacles and Barriers*

- Republicans reported fewer barriers and obstacles to getting involved than those who identified as Democrat or unaffiliated.
- Women reported more barriers to involvement than did men, in particular reporting that work schedules and childcare were very important barriers. Women also reported feeling more unwelcome than did men.
- New Hampshire residents with a high school education or lower reported more barriers or obstacles to engagement overall, particularly related to work schedules, childcare, not knowing where to start, and feeling they would be unable to make a difference.
- People under 49 tended to report more barriers than did people over 49. Most of these barriers were felt most acutely by those 18 to 34; however, those 35 to 49 struggled in particular with work schedules and childcare, and those 65 or older reported feeling they could not make a difference.
- Regional barriers and obstacles tended to vary, although Manchester, Connecticut Valley, and the Massachusetts border regions reported more barriers than those in other regions.
  - Although questions are often raised in New Hampshire about the challenges of transportation in rural areas, Manchester residents reported the most transportation challenges compared to all other regions, followed by the Seacoast. In fact, 36% of Manchester residents claimed transportation was a very important barrier, compared with only 16% of residents in the North Country or in the Central/Lakes Region.
  - North Country residents (41%) reported feeling they could not make a difference at much higher rates than those who lived near the Massachusetts border (25%), Connecticut Valley (21%), Manchester area (17%), Central/Lakes Region (16%), or Seacoast (16%). North Country residents were also more likely to report feeling unwelcome than those in other regions.
- Individuals who did not have civics education in school experienced more barriers and obstacles to community involvement than did those who had civics education. In particular, 80% of those who did not have civics education reported that a lack of information or knowing where to start was a barrier compared with 57% of those who did have civics education. Those who did not have civics education (76%) were also much more likely than those who did (46%) to feel they could not make a difference.

People under 49 tended to report more barriers to engagement than did people over 49.

Women reported more barriers to involvement than did men.

## Connecting in Community

Connecting in community includes how people interact and talk about important issues facing their community and the nation with others and how much they trust and help out neighbors.

Measures of connecting in community<sup>42</sup> include:

- **Connecting with friends and family**
- **Connecting with neighbors**
- **Connecting with people of a different racial, ethnic, or cultural background**
- **Doing favors for neighbors**
- **Helping out friends or extended family by providing food, housing, or money**
- **Getting together with neighbors to do something positive for the neighborhood or community**
- **Discussing political, societal, or local issues with friends or family<sup>43</sup>**
- **Discussing political, societal, or local issues with neighbors**
- **Trusting the people in your neighborhood**

New Hampshire residents demonstrate stronger civic health with friends and family than they do with their neighbors.

Overall, New Hampshire residents are highly connected with family and friends and show up to do something positive for the community, but Granite Staters rank lower than national averages when it comes to connecting with neighbors and people different from themselves, as well as helping each other out. Trust in our neighbors is also declining. Table 2 indicates where New Hampshire ranks in comparison to other states on U.S. Census Bureau measures.

**Table 2. Connecting in Community: New Hampshire Versus U.S.**

<b>Census Indicators of Civic Health</b>	<b>National rank, out of 51 (including DC)</b>	<b>Percent who engage in activity in NH</b>	<b>Percent who engage in activity in U.S.</b>
Connecting with friends and family	5th	89.2%	85.4%
Talking about political, societal, or local issues with friends and family	7th	46.3%	39.0%
Doing something positive for the neighborhood/community	22nd	23.1%	20.9%
Talking about political, societal, or local issues with neighbors	33rd	8.5%	8.7%
Connecting with neighbors	38th	31.8%	33.0%
Doing favors for neighbors	40th	8.2%	9.6%
Helping out friends or extended family with food, housing, or money	45th	6.3%	7.7%
Connecting with a person of a different racial, ethnic, or cultural background	46th	44.2%	56.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017)

New Hampshire residents ranked 46th in the nation in interacting with someone of a different racial, ethnic, or cultural background.

New Hampshire residents demonstrate stronger civic health with friends and family than they do with their neighbors. Although New Hampshire residents rank 5th in the nation in connecting with friends and family and 7th in talking about important issues with friends and family, on the same measures Granite Staters rank 38th in connecting with neighbors and 33rd in talking about important issues with neighbors. Further, when it comes to interacting with someone of a different racial, ethnic, or cultural background, New Hampshire ranks 46th in the nation.

## How New Hampshire Compares with the Nation

What these data suggest is that although New Hampshire residents have strong connections and trust within their immediate social circle, these connections are not as strong when it comes to the broader community, particularly among people with different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds. However, other rural states, particularly northern ones, tend to struggle on this last measure as well—Vermont ranked 51st in the nation and Maine 49th, and West Virginia, South Dakota, and Montana also ranked in the bottom five.

As Table 2 shows, New Hampshire residents were above national averages in their civic health when it came to:

- Connecting with family and friends (either in person, online, or on the phone)
- Getting together with people from their neighborhood to do something positive for the community
- Talking with family and friends about political, societal, or local issues

However, New Hampshire residents ranked lower than national averages on the following measures:

- Interacting with neighbors
- Providing food, housing, money, or help for friends or extended family
- Interacting with someone of a different racial ethnic or cultural background in the past year—either in person, over the phone, or through the internet or social media
- Talking with neighbors about political, societal, or local issues
- Doing favors for neighbors

## Comparing Trends Over Time

Since 2011, New Hampshire residents have decreased in their interactions with neighbors, but increased their interactions with family and friends. For instance:

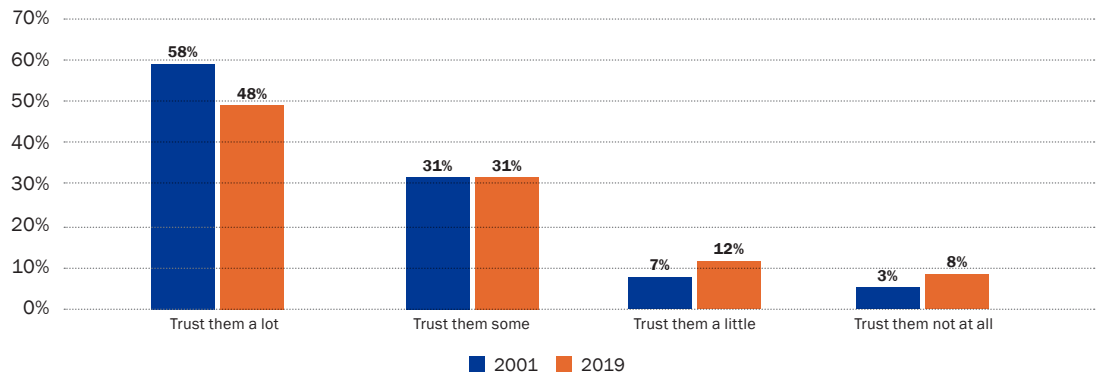
- In 2011, 14.5% of New Hampshire residents did favors for neighbors, but this declined to 8.2% in 2017.<sup>44</sup>
- In 2011, 42.7% of New Hampshire residents talked with their neighbors, but this declined to 31.8% in 2017. In comparison, 79% of New Hampshire residents talked with friends and family in 2011, and that increased to 89.2% in 2017. The number of New Hampshire residents who talked about politics with friends and family also increased.

However, these trends were not always consistent—although Granite Staters demonstrate decreases in interacting with or doing favors for neighbors, they actually increased quite a bit in their tendency to work with neighbors to do something positive for the community, such as coming together to fix or improve something, increasing from 10.4% in 2001 to 23.1% in 2017.

- New Hampshire residents' trust in their neighbors has also fallen over the past 18 years. While the majority of residents (89%) trusted their neighbors a lot or some in 2001, that number decreased to 79% in 2019. Fewer than half of New Hampshire residents reported they trust their neighbors a lot. There was a 5% increase from 2001 to 2019 in New Hampshire residents who do not trust their neighbors at all. See Figure 19.

Since 2011, New Hampshire residents have decreased in their interactions with neighbors, but increased their interactions with family and friends.

**Figure 19. Trust in Neighbors 2001-2019 in New Hampshire**



Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll

### Trends by Demographics

#### Education

There was considerable variability in how education levels affect connecting in community. People with a college degree demonstrate stronger civic health than those with less education on the following measures:

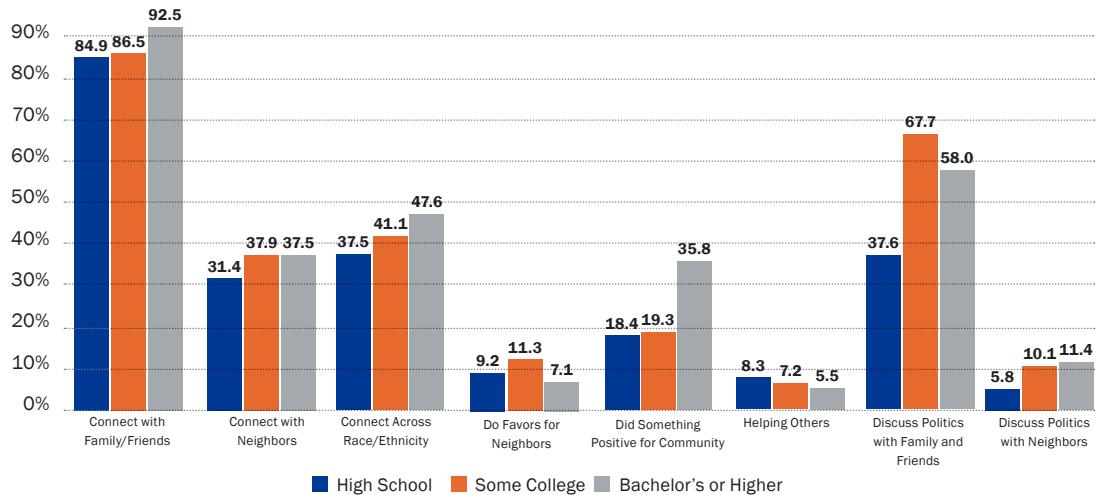
- Connecting with friends and family
- Connecting with people of different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds
- Doing something positive for the community
- Discussing political, societal, or local issues with neighbors

Most of the above factors are all aspects of human connection, which suggests that there is a relationship between education and social capital where more education tends to yield stronger social capital outcomes. In particular, people with a college degree were 10 percentage points more likely than people with a high school degree to connect with someone of a different racial, ethnic, or cultural background than their own. See Figure 20.

However, these results are not universal:

- People with only a high school education helped out friends and family members more than others.
- Individuals with some college education discussed political, societal, and local issues with friends and family more than those in other groups.

**Figure 20. Connecting in Community by Education in New Hampshire**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017)

People with a college degree were 10 percentage points more likely than people with a high school degree to connect with someone of a different racial, ethnic, or cultural background than their own.

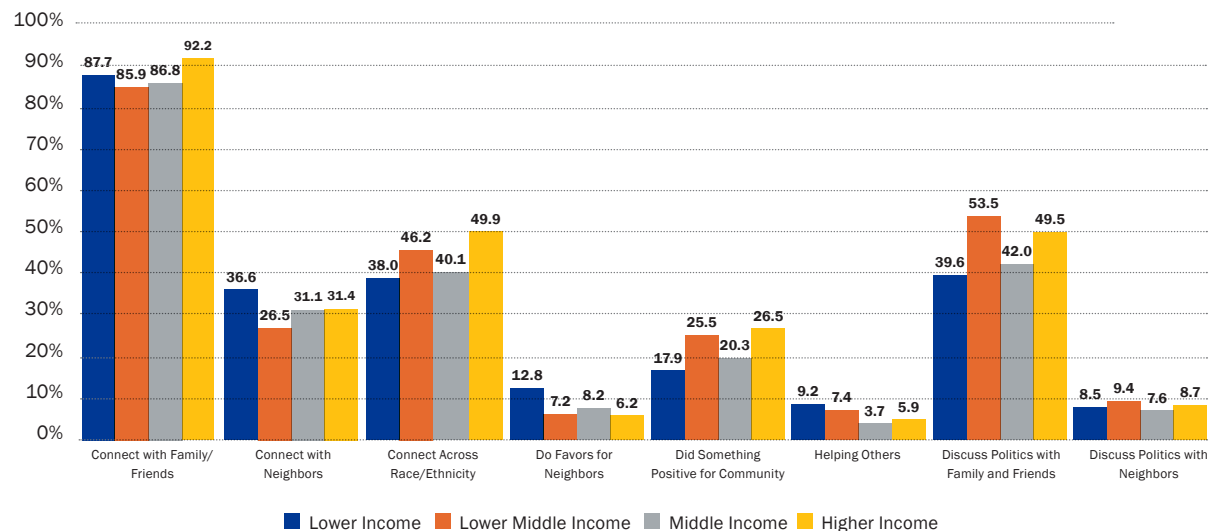


## Income

As seen in Figure 21, connecting in community varied by income level.

- Lower income people do favors for neighbors and help out friends and family with food/housing much more than those with higher income.
- Lower middle-income people discuss political, societal, and local issues the most with friends and family and neighbors, followed by those with higher incomes. Interestingly, those in the middle-income group were less likely to talk about these issues than their lower middle-income and higher income peers.
- Those with higher incomes connect more with friends and family. Similar to education levels, those with higher income are somewhat more likely to talk with someone with a different racial or ethnic identity than are low-income people. However, those in the lower income group connect more with their neighbors than any other group. These differences may be a function of opportunity related to where one lives; they are not necessarily a function of choices made by different income groups to interact with diverse friends or neighbors.
- Those with higher incomes are most likely to engage with their neighbors and do something positive for the community, followed by lower middle-income individuals.

**Figure 21. Connecting in Community by Income in New Hampshire**

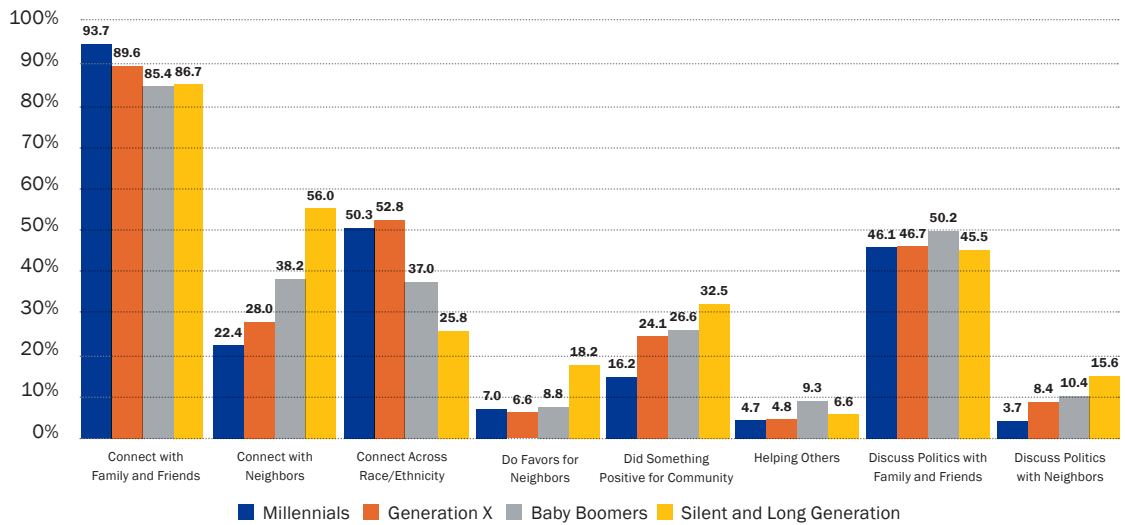


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017)

## Age

- As seen in Figure 22, Millennials do not connect as much in their neighborhoods as other age groups; their social connections tend to be centered on friends and family. In contrast, the Silent/Long Generation is interacting with and helping out neighbors much more than others.
- In general, older generations tend to connect, help out, and discuss important issues with their neighbors more than younger generations do.
- Baby Boomers discuss political, societal, or local issues with friends and family and are also helping out friends and family more than other generations.
- The Silent/Long Generation is connecting infrequently with people from different backgrounds other than their own. Generation Xers and Millennials are more likely to interact with people of different racial, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds.

**Figure 22. Connecting in Community by Age in New Hampshire**

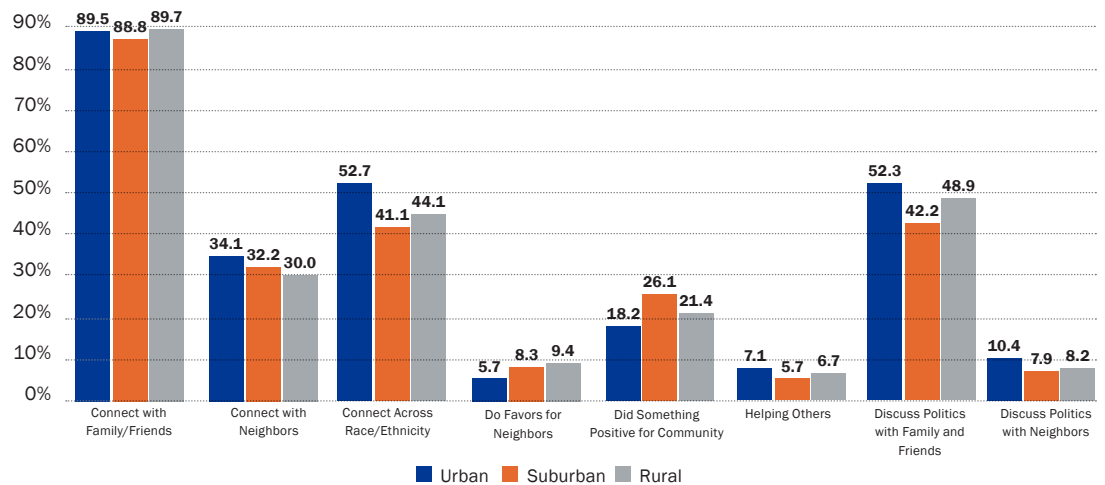


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017)

### Regional Differences

- As Figure 23 shows, urban residents are more likely to connect with people of a different racial, ethnic, or cultural background than themselves; suburban residents did so the least, even less than rural residents. Urban residents also connected and talked politics with their neighbors as well as friends and family more than other groups.
- Suburban residents were the most likely to do something positive for the community with their neighbors.

**Figure 23. Connecting in Community by Geography in New Hampshire**

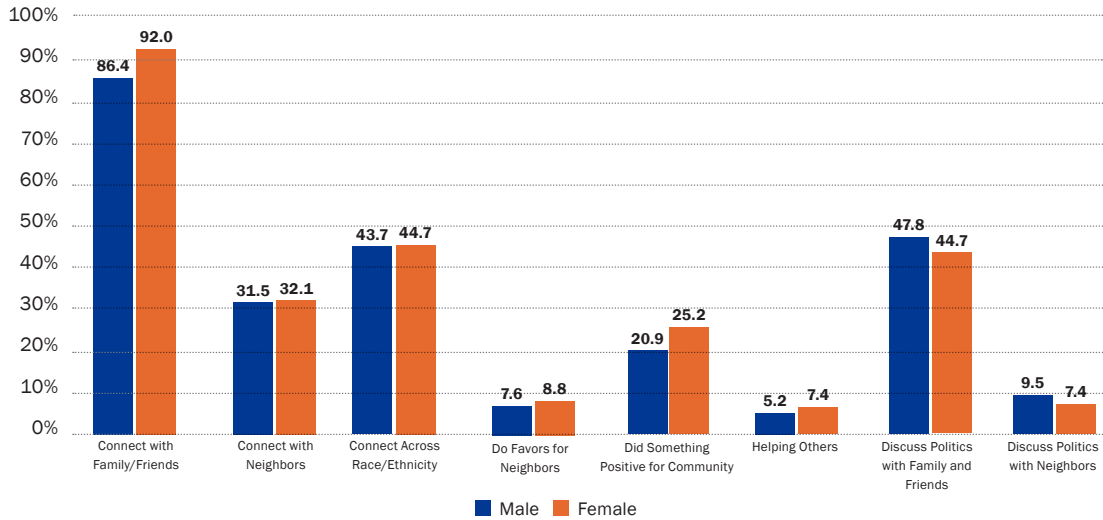


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017)

### Gender

- As seen in Figure 24, women are more likely to connect with friends and family, neighbors, and people different from them more than men.
- Women also take action to help others or do something positive in their community more often than men.
- Men discuss political, societal, or local issues with neighbors and friends/family more often than women.

**Figure 24. Connecting in Community by Gender in New Hampshire**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017)

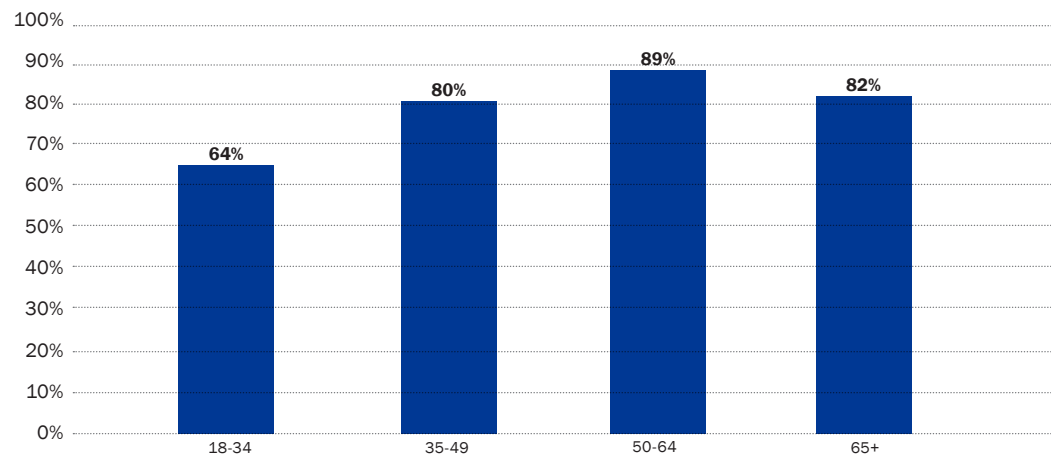
### Trusting Neighbors

Some groups trust their neighbors more than others do.

- Republicans (81%) trust their neighbors slightly more than Unaffiliated voters (79%) and Democrats (77%) do. People who listen to conservative radio identify as political conservatives, and those who read the *New Hampshire Union Leader* also demonstrate higher levels of trust than other groups.
- Women (82%) trust their neighbors more than men (75%) do.
- Individuals with a high school education or less (69%) demonstrate much lower levels of trust than people with higher levels of education such as a Bachelor's degree (87%).
- People who received civics education in school (81%) trust neighbors much more than people who did not receive civics education (66%).
- Those who voted in 2016 (81%) trust their neighbors much more than those who did not vote (67%).
- People ages 18-34 trust neighbors at much lower levels than other age groups. See Figure 25.

People who received civics education in school trust neighbors much more than people who did not receive civics education.

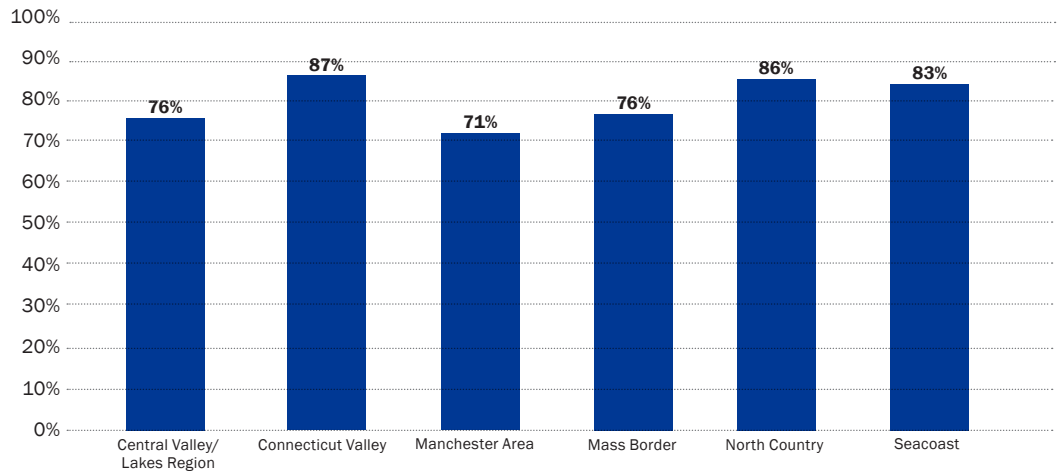
**Figure 25. Trust Neighbors by Age in New Hampshire**



Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll

- Individuals living in the Manchester region trust neighbors the least compared to other regions. Connecticut Valley and North Country residents trust their neighbors most. See Figure 26.

**Figure 26. Trust Neighbors by Region in New Hampshire**

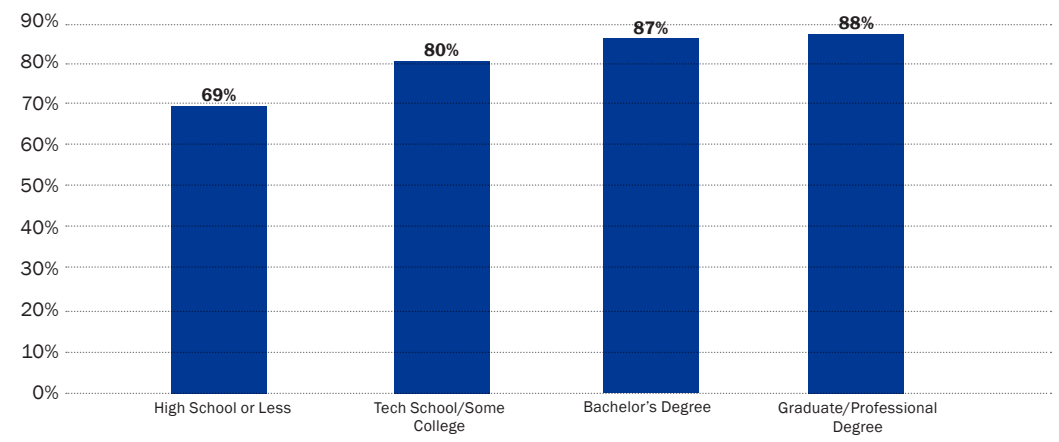


Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll

- Individuals with a high school education or less demonstrated much lower levels of trust in neighbors than those with higher levels of education. As education level increases, trust also tends to increase. See Figure 27.



**Figure 27. Trust Neighbors by Education in New Hampshire**



Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll

## Volunteering and Giving

The category “volunteering and giving” includes how much people are donating their time or money to serve their community or contribute to causes they care about. Measures of volunteering and giving include:

- **Volunteering**
- **Charitable giving—donations of \$25 or more to non-political groups or organizations, such as a charity, school, or religious organization**
- **Political giving—donations of \$25 or more to political organizations, parties, or campaigns**
- **Group membership—participation in groups, including civic or service organizations, community groups, religious or spiritual communities, recreational groups, and political or advocacy groups**

As seen in Table 3, New Hampshire residents volunteer and donate their time and money at rates above national averages. Notably, New Hampshire ranks second in the nation for the percent of the population engaged in charitable giving (65.5% NH; 52.2% US), second only to Utah. Granite Staters are also more likely to give to political causes (10.2% in NH; 8.7% US). Women, older people, and people with higher incomes and education levels volunteer and give at higher rates than others.<sup>45</sup>

**Table 3. Volunteering and Giving: New Hampshire Versus U.S.**

Census Indicators of Civic Health	National rank, out of 51 (including DC)	Percent who engage in activity in NH	Percent who engage in activity in U.S.
Charitable giving (% of people who gave \$25 or more to charitable organizations)	2nd	65.5%	52.2%
Political giving (% of people who gave \$25 or more to political causes)	14th	10.2%	8.7%
Volunteering	18th	35.7%	30.3%
Group Membership	21st	31.5%	27.1%

New Hampshire residents have consistently volunteered at higher rates than national averages for the past 15 years.

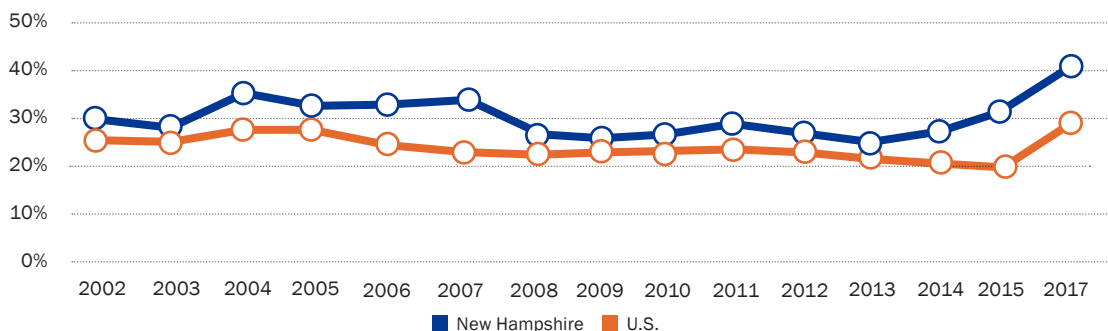
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017)

### Trends Over Time

Over time the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey has varied the wording of questions related to volunteering and giving, so identifying trends is a challenge. However, we know that:

- New Hampshire residents have consistently volunteered at higher rates than national averages for the past 15 years (2002-2017, see Figure 28). This may reflect the state’s average age and the number of people in retirement. Although volunteering dipped starting in 2011, likely due to effects of the Great Recession, the trend has been upward since then. From 2015-2017, New Hampshire saw an additional increase in volunteering, more than 5% higher than the national average—the highest since 2002.

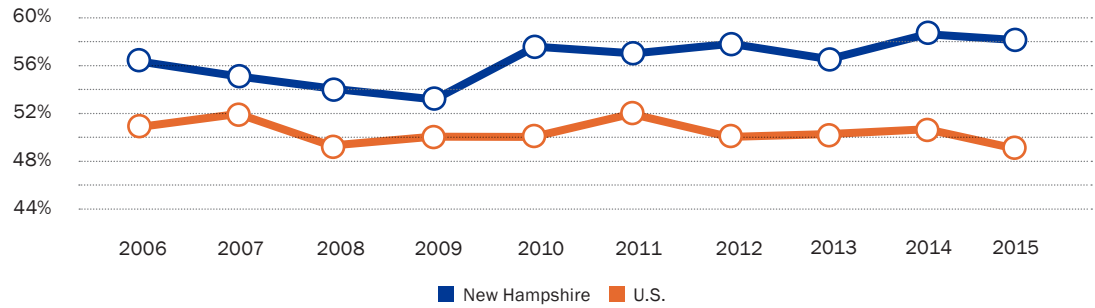
**Figure 28. Volunteering in New Hampshire Compared to U.S. Averages, 2002-2017**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017)

- Granite Staters gave to nonpolitical charitable organizations at higher rates than the national average for over a decade, from 2006-2015. From 2010-2015, charitable giving was steady, with 57%-59% of the population giving \$25 or more each year.<sup>46</sup> See Figure 29.<sup>47</sup>
- Participation in groups declined from 39% in 2011 to 31.5% in 2017.

**Figure 29. New Hampshire Compared to U.S. Charitable Giving (\$25 or More), 2006-2015**



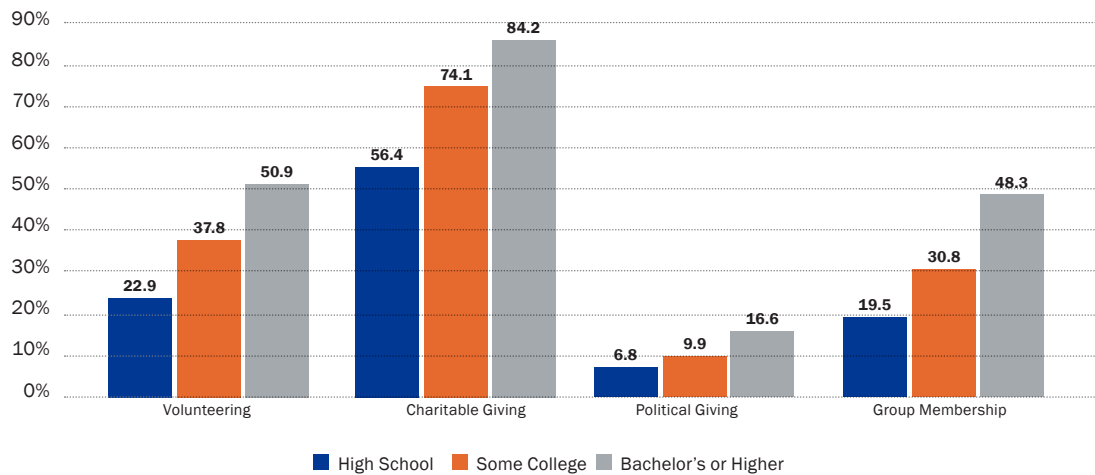
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017)

## Trends by Demographics

### Education

There was a relationship between education level and volunteering and giving. See Figure 30.

**Figure 30. Volunteering and Giving by Education in New Hampshire**



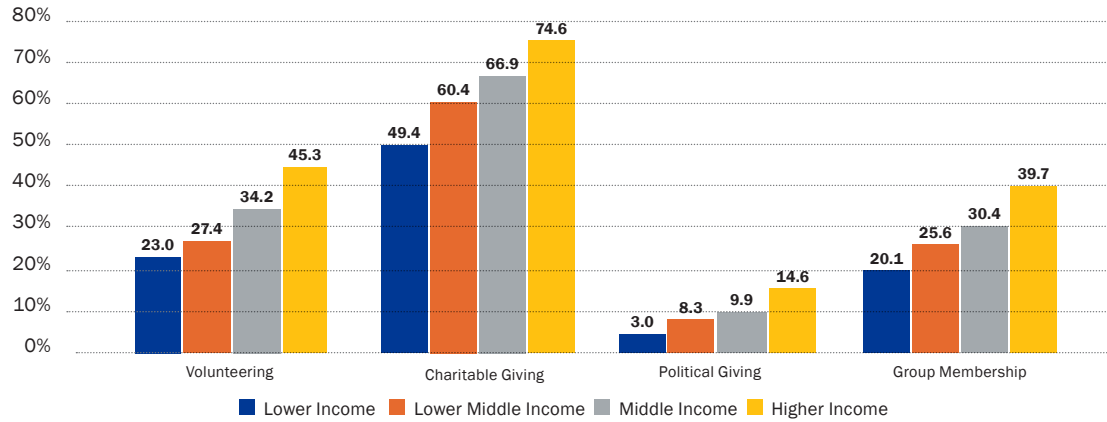
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017)

- On several outcomes, those with a college education participate at nearly 30 percentage points higher than do those with only a high school education.
  - Those with a college education volunteer 28% more than those with a high school degree.
  - Those with a college education give to charities 27.8% more than those with a high school degree.
  - Those with a college education join civic groups 28.8% more than those with a high school degree.
- Those with a college education were also about 10% more likely to engage in political giving.

## Income

Volunteering and giving tend to increase with income (see Figure 31). Giving of both money and time is less frequent for lower income New Hampshire residents than those with higher incomes. In particular, those with higher incomes (\$75,000+) were 25% more likely to give charitably than people in the lowest income category (less than \$35,000). Notably, those in the higher income category report making political donations at rates nearly five times higher than those in the lower income category.

**Figure 31. Volunteering and Giving by Income in New Hampshire**

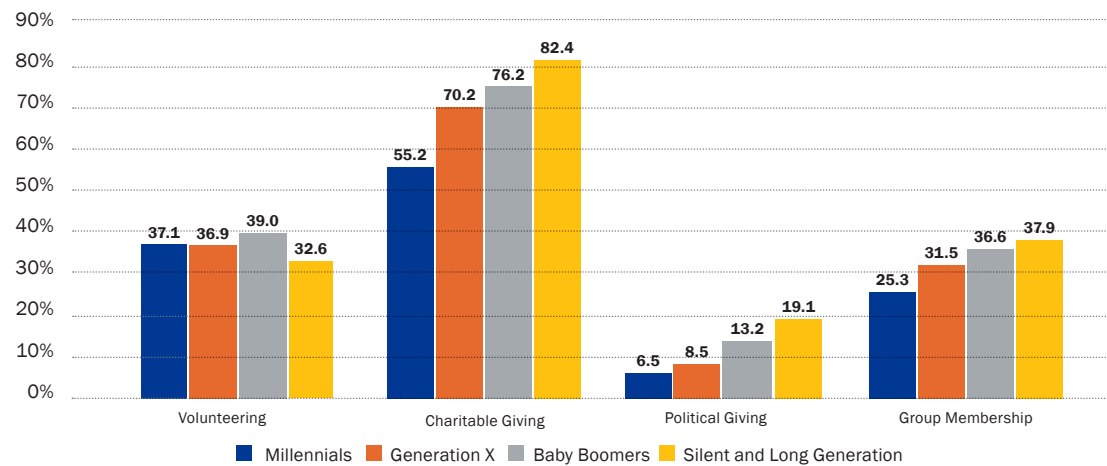


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017)

## Age

In general, older generations tended to demonstrate stronger giving and slightly stronger volunteerism/group membership than younger generations. There was a significant gap between the Silent and Long Generation and Millennials in charitable giving (27%) as well as political giving (13%). See Figure 32.

**Figure 32. Volunteering and Giving by Age in New Hampshire**

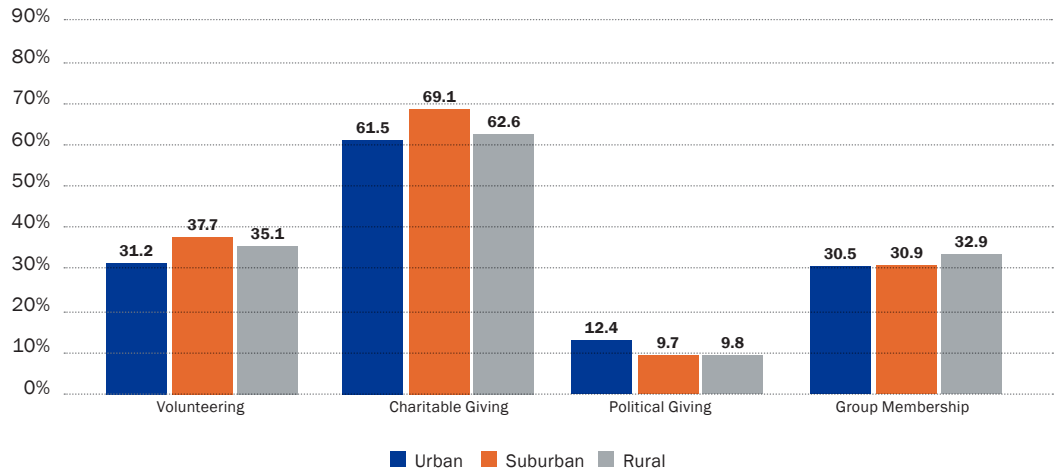


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017)

## Region

- Suburban residents are somewhat more likely to volunteer and make charitable donations compared to rural and urban residents.
- Urban residents give to political causes at slightly higher rates than suburban and rural residents.
- Rural residents are somewhat more likely to join groups than urban and suburban residents. See Figure 33.

**Figure 33. Volunteering and Giving by Region in New Hampshire**



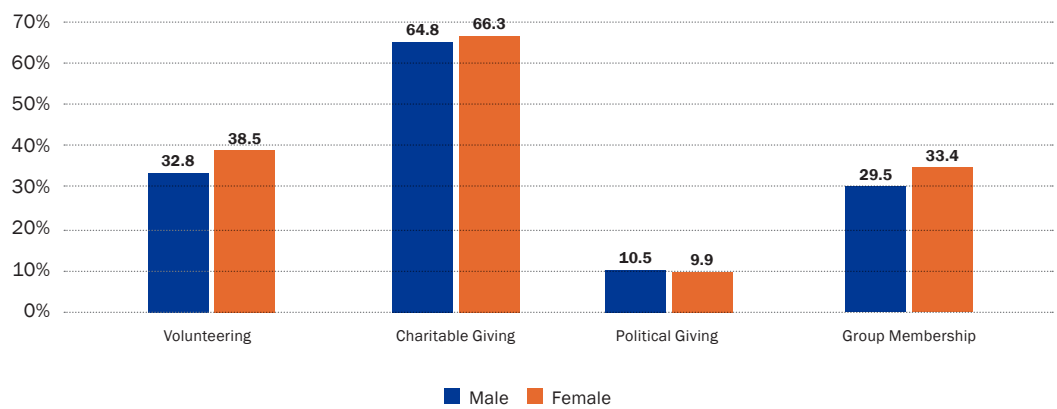
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017)



**Gender**

- Women and men demonstrate fairly similar behaviors when it comes to giving, volunteering, and belonging to groups. See Figure 34.

**Figure 34. Volunteering and Giving by Gender in New Hampshire**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017)



## REFLECTIONS:

### How Can We Work Together to Sustain and Strengthen Civic Health in the Granite State?

What the Civic Health tool means for local, regional, and state level actions.

Although the findings of the 2020 Civic Health Index were overall positive, significant threats to New Hampshire's civic health exist. These threats are exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, downturns in the national and state economy, and other political and social developments such as those associated with the 2020 Presidential Election and the newly energized movement for racial justice embodied by Black Lives Matter.

It is important when digesting this report to recognize that the data on New Hampshire's Civic Health were collected in 2017 through the fall of 2019, when the state and national landscape was quite different. We can guess how the events of 2020 will impact New Hampshire's civic health—but the reality is, the future is somewhat uncertain. Will the challenges of the pandemic bring our communities closer together or push them further apart? For instance, it is not clear how the financial stresses, social isolation, and public health risks of COVID-19 will affect how much Granite Staters engage with their neighbors, family and friends, and public officials. We also don't have enough data yet to assess how the transition from in-person to online meetings is affecting civic life.

Data from the 2020 Civic Health Index indicate that overall most Granite Staters don't frequently interact with people from a different racial or ethnic group. Although, historically, this trend might have been explained by low levels of diversity in a predominately white state, the demographics in the state are changing significantly, particularly in southern New Hampshire. Further, the significant disparities made clear by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities of color suggest that if New Hampshire is not proactive in creating equitable systems and addressing NH residents' lack of exposure to difference and how that could breed discrimination, the result could be even larger disparities not only in public health, but in civic health.

Based on what we have learned about New Hampshire's civic health over time, we offer suggestions below as reflections on potential next steps that can be taken at the public, civic, and private sectors to assure robust civic health into the future. We begin with those indicators where New Hampshire is ranked significantly lower than other states. In order to strengthen our civic health, we must begin with those areas where there is the most room and need for improvement. We envision multiple sectors, organizations, and actors taking on the kinds of initiatives described here.

The significant disparities made clear by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities of color suggest that if New Hampshire is not proactive, the result could be even larger disparities not only in public health, but in civic health.



**REFLECTION #1: At the individual as well as institutional and systemic levels, we must find ways to bring people together across racial, ethnic, cultural, political, and social identities.**

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New Hampshire is ranked in the bottom third of the country with respect to connecting with and doing favors for neighbors; talking with neighbors about political, social, and local issues; helping friends or family with food, housing, or money; and connecting with people of different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds (we are near the very bottom on this indicator). Younger residents (18-34) are least likely to trust their neighbors, and the oldest residents are least likely to connect with those of different racial or ethnic identities. Targeted efforts with these two groups to increase trust and offer greater opportunities for social interaction are important means to strengthen our civic health. As Jonathan Haidt has written, “The only cure for bias is other people.”<sup>48</sup> Increased interactions with those who are different may increase trust, and therefore it is imperative we offer engagement opportunities across social difference. This may help to protect New Hampshire against becoming a more divided and segregated state while maintaining our “Live Free or Die” culture, where part of what makes us unique is our freedom to be different and yet be in community together.

**REFLECTION #2: While New Hampshire has relatively high voter turnout in presidential election years, we are in the middle during mid-term elections, and some populations demonstrate lower voting than others.**

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And specific groups are less likely to vote at all—those without post-secondary education, Millennials, and those who did not receive civics education during their schooling. Those who are less likely to vote also report far more barriers to getting involved in their communities (including work schedules, lack of transportation, inadequate childcare, not knowing how to find out about opportunities for engagement, and feeling unwelcome or that their participation would not make any difference). Not voting, therefore, is highly associated with many barriers to getting involved. Targeted efforts to increase voter participation among those with less education and those in the 18-34 age range can help to enfranchise these groups.

**REFLECTION #3: Receiving civics education in elementary or secondary school is associated with many types of civic engagement.**

---

Those who report they received civics education also reported higher rates of voting, more knowledge about how to get involved in their communities, more trust in media and government, and feeling that they matter to their communities. It is therefore important that all New Hampshire students complete a civics education curriculum that provides them with the skills and knowledge needed to function as informed citizens. This will have diffuse effects across various kinds of engagement and participation.

**REFLECTION #4: There has been an erosion of trust, the basic ingredient of social capital, over the past two decades.**

---

This includes trust in key social institutions as well as trust in neighbors. Many people, especially those with lower incomes and less education, feel unwelcome at public meetings. One response to this erosion of trust is to create opportunities for people to spend time together, hear each other’s views, and participate in shared actions to address community challenges. The planned design and creation of civic infrastructures can offer places and spaces for connection, conversation, and collaboration. This can include attention to the built environment to be sure it fosters social interactions, changes in the ways that public meetings are conducted so they are more deliberative and less adversarial, and material resources to make it easier to help neighbors connect (e.g., loaner tool sheds, makerspaces, community gardens). Public libraries are increasingly playing a leadership role in this kind of community connecting and resource sharing and can be hubs for social connections and conversation that lead to greater social capital. They can include the use of visual and expressive arts as a means for shared activity, fun, and creative problem-solving. Activities that emphasize cross-cultural and cross-generational understanding are especially important as ways to increase trust and enhance understanding across difference. Although creating such opportunities can be more challenging during a pandemic, creating meaningful digital and safe in-person engagement opportunities are also possible, as we have learned this year.

**REFLECTION #5: There are a number of barriers faced by residents when it comes to showing up and expressing their views.**

---

Attending public gatherings, including to vote, is hampered by lack of transportation, lack of childcare, competing work schedules, and not knowing how to get involved. Municipal governments in partnership with schools and nonprofit organizations can do a better job of informing residents about how to get involved, how to make their voices heard, and how decisions get made in city councils, schools, conservation commissions, and so on. Not only is information about civic activity and opportunity important, but creating a sense that all voices from people of all backgrounds are welcome is critical to overcoming the perception by some that they are not welcome or respected in civic spaces. Accessible information available in multiple media formats, in residents' primary languages and conveyed in culturally sensitive ways (e.g., through familiar peers) is necessary to foster participation. In addition, offering opportunities to participate during hours that align with families' schedules (including during flexible work hours sanctioned by employers) and offering shared transportation and on-site childcare at public gatherings also help to overcome the barriers reported most often.

**REFLECTION #6: As this report has shown, regular assessment of civic health both at the state and at the regional or town levels is necessary in order to track trends over time and identify necessary policies and practices that can increase participation and engagement.**

---

Such assessments could be carried out by regional planning and economic development councils or other entities with related capacity and missions. More regional and local assessment of civic health could address at a more granular level the disparities that the 2020 data have demonstrated at the state level. Regional and local data can also point to patterns of income inequality that are associated with differences in civic behaviors. The consistent relationship between income and civic participation, mediated by educational achievement, points to the need to address the growing income gap as a means to foster civic health. In this light, economic development at the regional and local level is an important tool, among others, to stronger civic life. Thus, regular assessment of civic health can be connected to other measures of well-being, including economic conditions, in order to design effective strategies that can increase the number and variety of those who show up, express their views, help each other out, and vote for those who represent them. Because we don't know how the pandemic in particular will affect New Hampshire's civic health, assessments of local and state dynamics sooner rather than later will be critical in order for us to both understand and effectively respond to new needs that this unique moment in history presents.

**REFLECTION #7: Further research is needed, particularly data related to race and ethnicity.**

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As a note, there were several areas where our data were a helpful start but not sufficient to painting the full picture of civic life in New Hampshire—in particular, we need more data about New Hampshire's civic health in relation to race, ethnicity, and culture, as well as further data about our charitable giving. It may be helpful to include local people in New Hampshire communities in the data collection and data analysis process, as they will be able to identify resources and challenges in ways that researchers who do not live in the community may miss. Since racial and ethnic data have historically not been available from the sources that we drew this report from, we may need to conduct additional studies with oversampling to attain sufficient race and ethnicity data, or create new data collection methods that surface how race and ethnicity affect civic health.

## TECHNICAL NOTE

Findings in this report are from two key data sources—the National Conference on Citizenship’s (NCoC) analysis of the U.S. Census Current Population Survey (CPS) data as well as the University of New Hampshire’s Survey Center’s Granite State Poll from October, 2019. Volunteering and Civic Engagement estimates are from CPS September Volunteering/Civic Engagement Supplement from 2017 and voting estimates from 2018 November Voting and Registration Supplement. Any and all errors related to data from the CPS are NCoC’s own. Any and all errors related to data from the Granite State Poll are the University of New Hampshire’s Survey Center and Carsey School of Public Policy’s own. To test relationships between variables, we used chi-square tests.

### Current Population Survey Information

Using a probability selected sample of about 150,000 occupied households, the CPS collects monthly data on employment and demographic characteristics of the nation. Depending on the CPS supplement, the single-year New Hampshire CPS sample size used for this report ranges from 344-952 (volunteering/civic engagement supplement) and to 1,247 (voting supplement) residents from across New Hampshire. This sample is then weighted to representative population demographics for the district. Estimates for the volunteering and civic engagement indicators (e.g., volunteering, working with neighbors, making donations) are based on U.S. residents ages 16 and older. Voting and registration statistics are based on U.S. citizens who are 18 and older (eligible voters). When we examined the relationship between educational attainment and engagement, estimates are based on adults ages 25 and older with the assumption that younger people may be completing their education.

Because multiple sources of data with varying sample sizes are used, the report is not able to compute one margin of error for New Hampshire across all indicators. Any analysis that breaks down the sample into smaller groups (e.g., gender, education) will have smaller samples and therefore the margin of error will increase. Furthermore, national rankings, while useful in benchmarking, may be small in range, with one to two percentage points separating the state/district ranked first from the state/district ranked last. It is also important that our margin of error estimates are approximate, as CPS sampling is highly complex and accurate estimation of error rates involves many parameters that are not publicly available.

### Granite State Poll Information

The University of New Hampshire Survey Center conducts statewide polling, including a quarterly public opinion survey called the Granite State Poll. In the October 2019 Granite State Poll, researchers Bruce Mallory and Quixada Moore-Vissing added to the poll fifteen questions drawn from the Social Capital Community Benchmarks Survey as well as their own original questions. The Social Capital Community Benchmarks Survey is a national survey related to civic engagement in America that was designed by the Saguaro Seminar at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University in 2000. The survey was run in communities across the country, including in the state of New Hampshire in 2001. Thus we were able to use these questions for a 19-year retrospective of civic engagement in New Hampshire. Five hundred seven (507) randomly selected New Hampshire adults were interviewed in English by landline and cellular telephone between October 4 and October 17, 2019. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 4.4 percent.

As a note, the Current Population Survey and the Granite State Poll work with different timelines, which can add to confusion in this report. The Current Population Survey is a longitudinal data source from the U.S. Census. The Census has asked some questions for decades but also frequently modifies or adds questions. The latest data available from the U.S. Census Current Population Survey for Voting were from November of 2018, while the latest Volunteering and Civic Engagement Supplement were from 2017. The Granite State Poll only draws from data from the fall of 2019 but was able to make some longitudinal comparisons from data drawn in 2001, since we used select questions from the Social Capital and Community Benchmarks Survey.

Another important data consideration to understand is that for some Census measures from the Current Population Survey there were not enough data to report demographic information such as race and ethnicity or educational levels for individuals with less than a high school education, or for individuals from the Generation Z age group. Data were not reported for categories with an unweighted sample size of less than 100.

### Generation and Income Categories

The U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey and NCoC provided subgroup data of the following generations and defined them as follows: Millennials, born 1982-1995; Generation X, born 1981-1965; Baby Boomers, born 1946-1964; and Silent and Long Generation, born before 1930-1945. The U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey and the NCoC provided subgroup data of the following by income: Less than \$35,000; \$35,000-\$49,999; \$50,000-\$74,999; and \$75,000 or higher. We categorize these as lower income, lower middle income, middle income, and higher income.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> We are deeply grateful for the funding of the 2020 NH Civic Health Index, provided by the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, the Endowment for Health, NH Campus Compact, and the University of New Hampshire.

<sup>2</sup> NCoC has worked with various partners in New Hampshire over the years to publish the New Hampshire Civic Health Indices. The 2006 Civic Health Index was published by the New Hampshire Institute for Politics at St. Anselm College. The more recent Indexes were published by the Carsey School of Public Policy.

Mallory, B. & Moore-Vissing, Q. (2013). 2012 New Hampshire Civic Health Index. Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire and the NCoC. <https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1192&context=carsey>

Dillon, M. & Rogers, S. (2009). 2009 New Hampshire Civic Health Index. NCoC. <https://www.ncoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/2009NewHampshireCHI.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> *What is New Hampshire?* (2018). Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire. <https://carsey.unh.edu/what-is-new-hampshire>

<sup>4</sup> Vinnakota, R. (November, 2019). From Civics Education to a Civic Learning System: A Landscape Analysis and Case for Collaboration. [https://rbw.civic-learning.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CE\\_online.pdf](https://rbw.civic-learning.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CE_online.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017) and Voting in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2018 and 2016).

<sup>6</sup> National Conference on Citizenship. <https://ncoc.org/>

<sup>7</sup> McKinley, S., Azem, Z.S., and Smith, A.E. Granite State Poll Report, Carsey School of Public Policy (October 2019). UNH Survey Center.

<sup>8</sup> *What is New Hampshire?* (2018). Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire. <https://carsey.unh.edu/what-is-new-hampshire>

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, K.M., “New Hampshire Demographic Trends in an Era of Economic Turbulence” (2019). The Carsey School of Public Policy at the Scholars’ Repository. 380. <https://scholars.unh.edu/carsey/380>

- 10 We obtained our permission to use this survey through the UNH Survey Center and New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. The instrument we used was the 2000 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey. The UNH Survey Center ran the data in 2001. For more information, contact the Survey Center or NHCF. Retrieved October 02, 2020, from <https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/featured-collections/2000-social-capital-community-benchmark-survey>
- 11 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm>
- 12 When data on racial and ethnic identity are available, we use them. However, national surveys such as the Current Population Survey often do not include enough members of such groups, given the historic low numbers of residents who are people of color, to provide reliable statistics. As New Hampshire becomes more diverse, it will be increasingly possible to make such statistical distinctions.
- 13 Stay Work Play New Hampshire Quality of Life Survey. (2018, June 19). Retrieved October 02, 2020, from <https://stayworkplay.org/survey/>
- 14 *What is New Hampshire?* (2018). Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire. <https://carsey.unh.edu/what-is-new-hampshire>
- 15 Ibid
- 16 Ibid
- 17 Ibid
- 18 U.S. Census Bureau (2019, December 18). American Community Survey 4-year Public Use Microdata Samples. 2014-2018 Poverty Rate in the United States by County. Retrieved October 23, 2020, from <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/2014-2018-poverty-rate-by-county.html>
- 19 Ibid
- 20 U.S. Census Bureau. (2020, June 26). American Community Survey 3-year Public Use Microdata Samples. Income and Poverty in the United States: 2018. Retrieved October 23, 2020, from <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2019/demo/p60-266.html>
- 21 "New Hampshire demographics of poor children" (November 19, 2018). National Center for Children in Poverty. [http://www.nccp.org/profiles/NH\\_profile\\_7.html](http://www.nccp.org/profiles/NH_profile_7.html)
- 22 Spantchak, Y. (November 21, 2019). Income inequality in New Hampshire, explained. New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. <https://www.nhcf.org/what-were-up-to/income-inequality-in-new-hampshire-explained/>
- 23 U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). American Community Survey and Community Population Survey 4-year Public Use Microdata Samples. U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: New Hampshire: Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2014-2018. Retrieved October 23, 2020, from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NH/EDU685218>
- 24 Morris, K. (May 2020). Racial disparity in America: The worst states for black Americans. Zippia. <https://www.zippia.com/advice/racial-disparity-worst-states/?fbclid=IwAROKTTL5N0weNux45noh0T3sHOT7-K1DBcZvJBZIDZXIqHXYu5S4TmArsg>
- 25 Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in New Hampshire Weekly Summary Report. (May 4, 2020). New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services. <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/covid19/covid-weekly-report-05042020.pdf>
- 26 NH Department of Education (2019) Cost Per Pupil by district, 2018-2019, <https://www.education.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt326/files/inline-documents/cost-pupil-district18-19.pdf>
- 27 "Neighbors" is not defined explicitly in the Current Population Survey. Interpretation is left up to the respondent. Thus, neighbors in an urban context may be in close physical proximity and encountered frequently; neighbors in rural contexts may be some distance away and encountered less often than in urban settings.
- 28 1978 was the last data point we were able to access on midterm turnout, so it is possible this is the highest rate in voter turnout in years prior to 1978 as well, but we do not have the data to make this claim.
- 29 DiStaso, John. (November 6, 2020). More than 73% of New Hampshire's Voting Age Population Cast Ballots, Resulting in Record Turnout. WMUR, <https://www.wmur.com/article/new-hampshire-sets-election-turnout-record-2020/34599609>
- 30 2010 Ohio Civic Health Index (November 8, 2010). National Conference on Citizenship. <https://www.ncoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/2010OhioCHI.pdf>
- 31 In the Current Population Survey Data, the U.S. Census Bureau categorizes individuals who make \$75,000 as the higher income bracket, which is defined as a national standard. However, in New Hampshire, the median income is \$74,057. Thus, some data that is categorized as "higher income" may be more indicative of middle income experiences in New Hampshire. See "Income and Poverty" Quick Facts New Hampshire (July 1, 2019). U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/NH>
- 32 Research puts spotlight on the impact of loneliness in the U.S. and potential root causes. (May 2018). Cigna. <https://www.cigna.com/newsroom/news-releases/2018/new-cigna-study-reveals-loneliness-at-epidemic-levels-in-america>
- 33 McKinley, S., Azem, Z.S., and Smith, A.E. Granite State Poll Report, Carsey School of Public Policy (October 2019). UNH Survey Center.
- 34 See Technical Note on p. 44 for more information about our data sources. All data in Table 1 were from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Voting in New Hampshire, 2018, except for the presidential voting, which is from 2016.
- 35 The UNH Granite State Poll data were run by the UNH Survey Center and included questions from the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey as well as some original questions the researchers of this report created. See the Technical Note on p. 44 for more information.
- 36 Unfortunately, we were not able to examine data of those with less than a high school education because the percentage of individuals with less than a high school education in New Hampshire were very small. However, this is important data to explore, and we suggest that future studies try to look at intersections between less than a high school education and civic outcomes.
- 37 Higher income individuals were categorized as those earning \$75,000 or more, Middle income as \$50,000-\$74,999, Lower Middle income as \$35,000 to \$49,999, and Lower income as less than \$35,000.
- 38 The generational breakdown is: Millennials, born 1982-1995; Generation X, born 1981-1965; Baby Boomers, born 1946-1964; and, Silent and Long Generation, born before 1930-1945. There were not generational data available for the presidential and midterm voting categories.
- 39 For instance, for those who voted in 2016, 16% expressed trust in local government, but for those who did not vote, only 7% expressed trust in local government. 45% of those who voted in 2016 expressed trust in national government but for those who did not vote, only 36% expressed trust in national government.
- 40 The exact wording of the question was "Do you agree or disagree that you feel like you matter to other people in your community?"
- 41 2017 Youth risk behavior survey results. New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/hsdm/documents/hs-summary-yrbs-results-2017.pdf>
- 42 Connecting with people was measured by a response of how frequently respondents talked with or spent time with people of certain groups, including family/friends, neighbors, and people of a different racial, ethnical, or cultural background than their own. So, for instance, the question asked about family and friends was "How often do you talk to or spend time with friends and family?"
- 43 Important issues could range from local concerns—like issues in the local schools or if a real estate development is going to be built, to social issues, such as legalization of retail marijuana or addressing homelessness, to political issues, such as who is running for office either locally or nationally, or how people feel about certain politicians.
- 44 This decline may be a function of the recovery from the Great Recession of 2009. People simply needed less assistance as their economic conditions improved. In 2020, we expect this number has increased significantly as the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the lives of so many.
- 45 We note that data regarding charitable giving have become less reliable for making longitudinal and state-to-state comparisons as the IRS has limited the ability of tax filers to itemize charitable deductions since 2018. For tax year 2018, about 10 percent of New Hampshire IRS filers itemized charitable deductions. We don't know how much money was donated by those who did not itemize.
- 46 Longitudinal data comparisons could only be made between 2006-2015 because after 2015 the survey question was reworded to distinguish between charitable and political giving.
- 47 Political giving was recently added to the Census, and the group membership question was recently re-worded, so there are no longitudinal data yet available for those measures.
- 48 Haidt, Jonathan. (2012). *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided*. First Vintage Books.

# CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

## State and Local Partnerships

NCoC began America's Civic Health Index in 2006 to measure the level of civic engagement and health of our democracy. In 2009, NCoC was incorporated into the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act and directed to expand this civic health assessment in partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service and the U.S. Census Bureau.

NCoC now works with partners in more than 30 communities nationwide to use civic data to lead and inspire a public dialogue about the future of citizenship in America and to drive sustainable civic strategies.

### STATES

#### Alabama

University of Alabama  
David Mathews Center for Civic Life  
Auburn University

#### Arizona

Center for the Future of Arizona

#### California

California Forward  
Center for Civic Education  
Center for Individual and  
Institutional Renewal  
Davenport Institute

#### Colorado

Metropolitan State University of Denver  
The Civic Canopy  
Denver Metro Chamber Leadership  
Campus Compact of Mountain West  
History Colorado  
Institute on Common Good

#### Connecticut

Everyday Democracy  
Secretary of the State of Connecticut  
DataHaven  
Connecticut Humanities  
Connecticut Campus Compact  
The Fund for Greater Hartford  
William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund  
Wesleyan University

#### District of Columbia

ServeDC

#### Florida

Florida Joint Center for Citizenship  
Bob Graham Center for Public Service  
Lou Frey Institute of Politics  
and Government

#### Georgia

GeorgiaForward  
Carl Vinson Institute of Government,  
The University of Georgia  
Georgia Family Connection Partnership

#### Illinois

McCormick Foundation

#### Indiana

Indiana University Center on Representative  
Government  
Indiana Bar Foundation  
Indiana Supreme Court  
Indiana University Northwest  
IU Center for Civic Literacy

#### Kansas

Kansas Health Foundation

#### Kentucky

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Institute for Citizenship & Social  
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McConnell Center, University of Louisville

#### Maryland

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Center for Civic Education  
Common Cause-Maryland  
Maryland Civic Literacy Commission

#### Massachusetts

Harvard Institute of Politics

#### Michigan

Michigan Nonprofit Association  
Michigan Campus Compact  
Michigan Community Service Commission  
Volunteer Centers of Michigan  
Council of Michigan Foundations  
Center for Study of Citizenship at Wayne  
State University

#### Minnesota

Center for Democracy and Citizenship

#### Missouri

Missouri State University  
Park University  
Saint Louis University  
University of Missouri Kansas City

University of Missouri Saint Louis  
Washington University

#### Nebraska

Nebraskans for Civic Reform

#### New Hampshire

Carsey School of Public Policy  
Campus Compact of New Hampshire  
University System of New Hampshire  
New Hampshire College & University  
Council

#### New York

Siena College Research Institute  
New York State Commission on National  
and Community Service

#### North Carolina

Institute for Emerging Issues

#### Ohio

Miami University Hamilton Center for  
Civic Engagement

#### Oklahoma

University of Central Oklahoma  
Oklahoma Campus Compact

#### Pennsylvania

Center for Democratic Deliberation  
National Constitution Center

#### South Carolina

University of South Carolina Upstate

#### Texas

The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life,  
University of Texas at Austin

#### Virginia

Center for the Constitution at James  
Madison's Montpelier  
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

### ISSUE SPECIFIC

#### Latinos Civic Health Index

Carnegie Corporation

#### Veterans Civic Health Index

Got Your 6

#### Millennials Civic Health Index

Mobilize.org  
Harvard Institute of Politics  
CIRCLE

#### Economic Health

Knight Foundation  
Corporation for National & Community  
Service (CNCS)  
CIRCLE

## CITIES

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### **Atlanta**

Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta

### **Chicago**

McCormick Foundation

### **Kansas City & Saint Louis**

Missouri State University

Park University

Saint Louis University

University of Missouri Kansas City

University of Missouri Saint Louis

Washington University

### **Miami**

Florida Joint Center for Citizenship

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Miami Foundation

### **Pittsburgh**

University of Pittsburgh

Carnegie Mellon University

### **Seattle**

Seattle City Club

Boeing Company

Seattle Foundation

### **Twin Cities**

Center for Democracy and Citizenship

Citizens League

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

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Author of *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and*

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**National Conference on Citizenship**  
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